



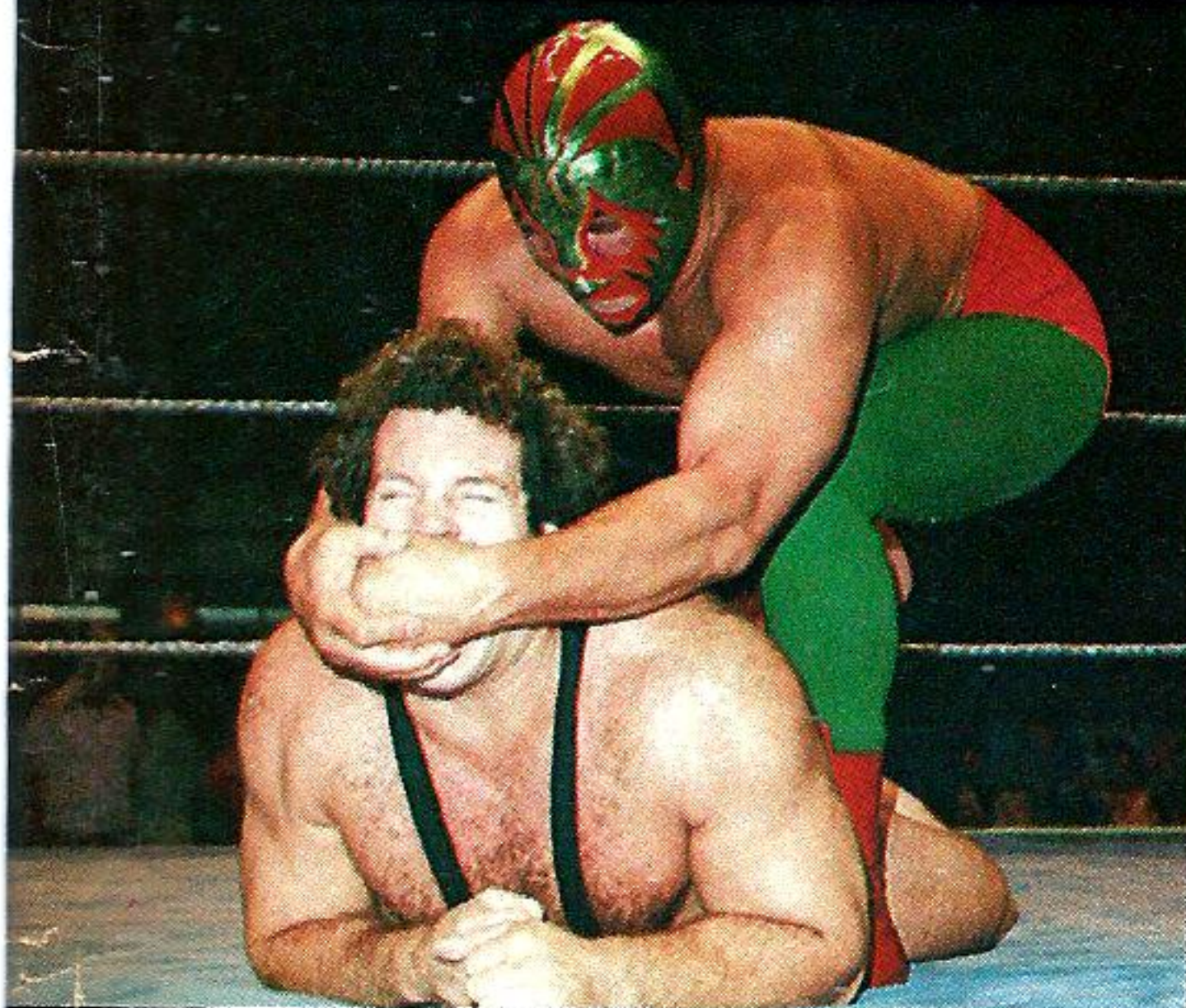
THE BEST OF THE

Fall 1981

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Wrestler

Patera vs. Mascaras:
THE MATCH
THAT COST THEM
THE WWF TITLE



Andre & Putski:
SOMEONE MUST BEAT
THEM BEFORE THEY
DESTROY THEMSELVES

DINO BRAVO:
"I WANT
BACKLUND...
NOW!"

RIC FLAIR:
"NOBODY
TAKES
MY TITLE
AND LIVES!"



THE BEST OF THE **Wrestler**

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INTRODUCTION

THE BEST OF THE WRESTLER: THE BEST OF THE BEST!

WELCOME ONCE AGAIN to the finest anthology magazine in wrestling. This edition of *Best Of The Wrestler* will again prove that reliving the finest in wrestling stories is like reliving beautiful old memories.

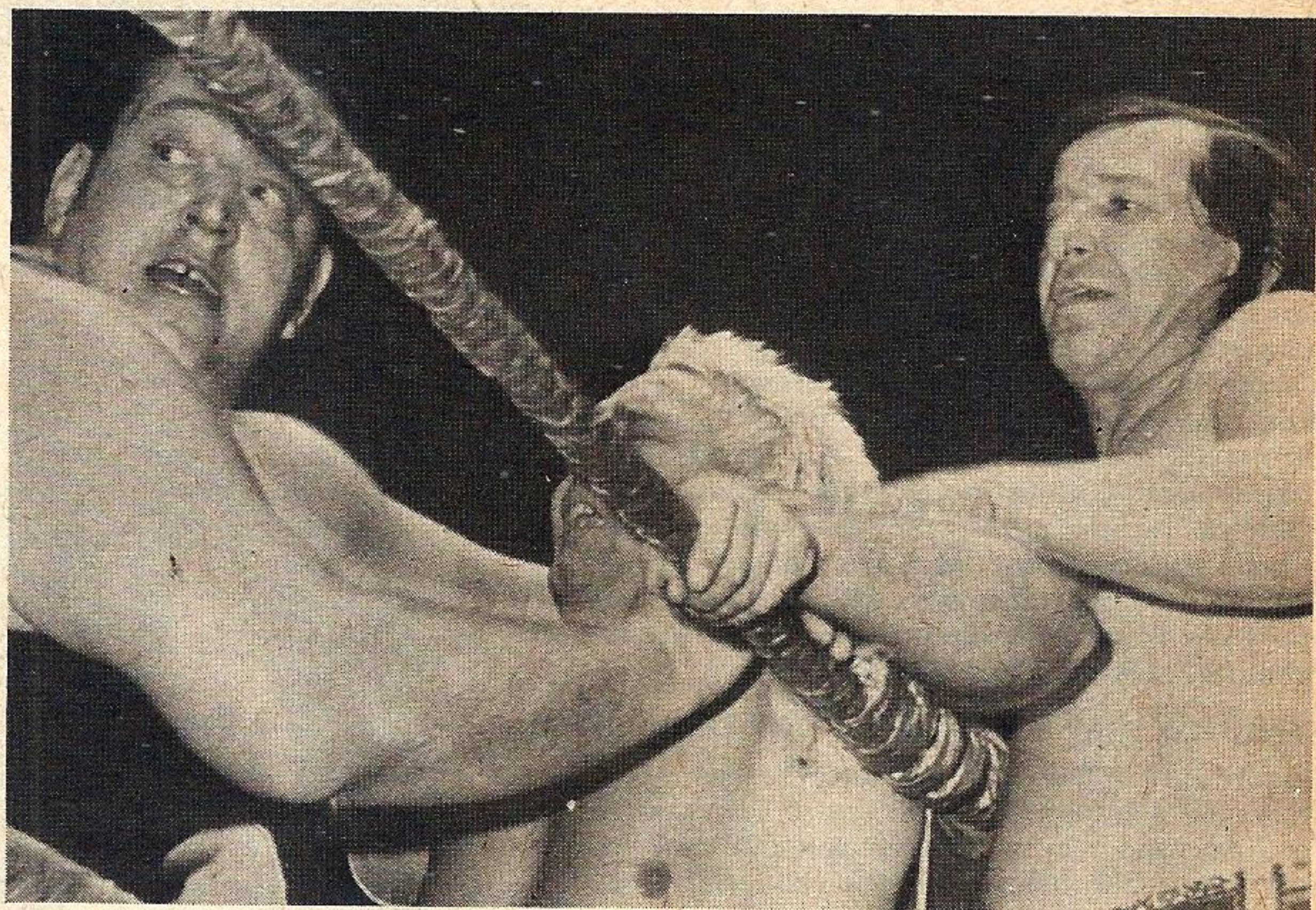
You Wouldn't Believe This Match, from the September 1978 issue of *The Wrestler*, starts off this month's collection. It concerns a weird battle between two of wrestling's strangest men, Buggy McGraw and Ox Baker.

In March 1974 we told you about **The Wrestler Who Couldn't Afford To Lose A Single Bout**. Read again about the terrifying mission of this bizarre wrestler from the Middle East.

When two great wrestlers tangle, the adventure of the match usually see-saws from one man to the other. In **Standoff!** (June 1976) our photographer captured that split second when everything was equal between then-NWA champion Terry Funk and challenger Billy Robinson.

Even with the blood and brutality, there is a lighter side to wrestling. We tried to capture it in **Turnbuckle Chuckles**, a collection of funny moments first printed in our April 1978 issue.

In December 1978, young fan favorite Dino Bravo shocked the



wrestling world when he said, "**I Want Backlund . . . Now!**" Now that a few years have passed, a re-examination of this story proves very interesting.

Back in March 1978, young Ric Flair, then the U.S. champion, was one of the most hated wrestlers in the world. He defended his title with any means necessary. So no one was surprised when Flair said "**Nobody Takes My Title And Lives!**" Although Flair has since changed his ways, this story shows a side of the man that will never change.

The Valiant brothers burst upon the WWF scene with the force and violence of an atomic bomb. But

Gorilla Monsoon, with the aid of tag team partner Chief Jay Strongbow, traps hated Jim Valiant in the corner. For full details on this great night for wrestling, see the exciting story on page 27.

the wrestlers they hurt on the way up had scores to settle later on. **When Gorilla Monsoon Got Revenge Against The Valiants**, (June 1975) illustrates that wrestlers like the Valiants can make too many enemies.

Perhaps our criticism of Harley Race was too harsh. We admit we were at times too hard on him. In September 1978, Race responded to us. "**Get The Hell Off My Back!**" was Race's raging answer to some of our recent stories. Read just how
(Continued on page 53)

IF THERE WEREN'T pictures to support the truth of this story, no one would believe this match had happened.

First, let us consider the participants. All children under the age of 14 and cardiac patients over 50 please leave the room. Ox Baker and Buggy McGraw. Let those names roll around in your mouth, then rinse. Then visualize them, referring to the pictures.

Nightmares aren't too bad,

are they? Look at those two men. Ah-ha, we see a double-take in the audience. They look alike, don't they. Frightening, isn't it? Well, God works his wonders in mysterious ways.

Now that you have been subjected to them, ponder this, if you dare. They wrestled each other. Yup, not fooling. Buggy McGraw and Ox Baker, together in the same ring.

Oh right, the match. First a little pre-match ridicule.

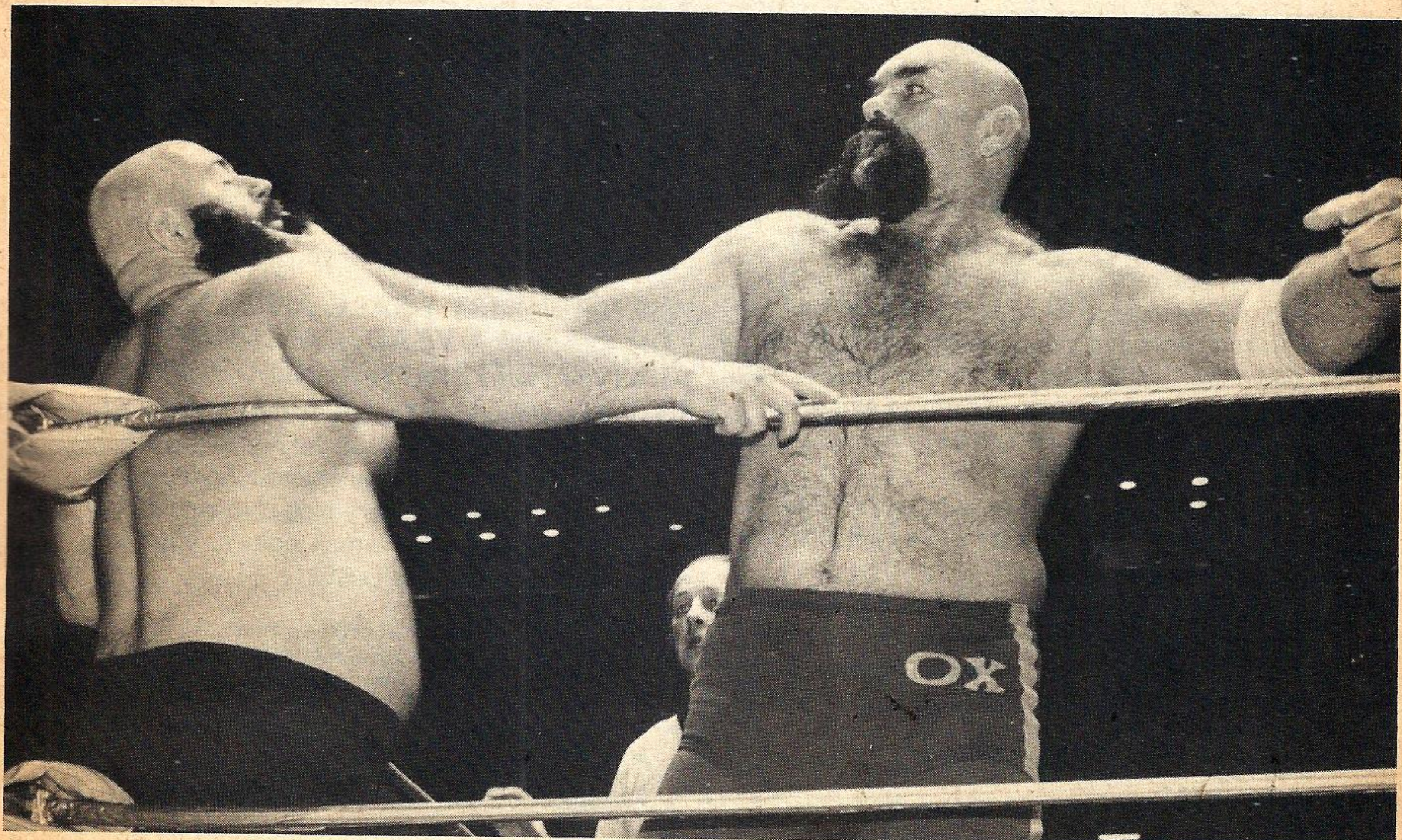
"Have ya ever seen such an ugly dude in all your life?" Ox thundered. "McGraw is so ugly he broke three sewer pipes just by looking at 'em on the way to the arena."

Isn't this something like the pot calling the kettle black?

"Baker has such an ugly puss," Buggy roared. "I hate bald guys who try to cover their faces with hair. I'm not bald, look," McGraw searched for a

(Continued on page 50)

YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE THIS MATCH

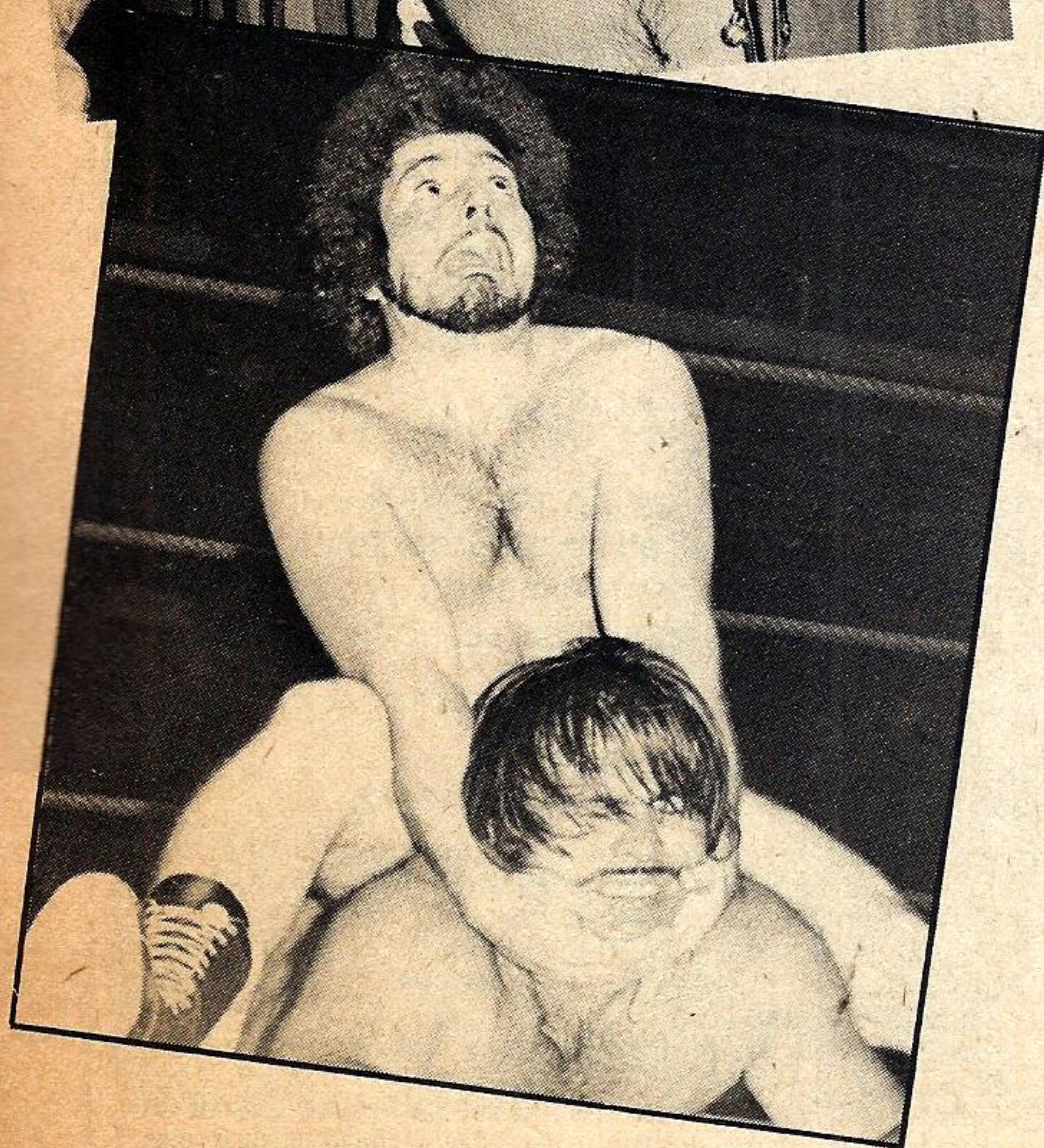
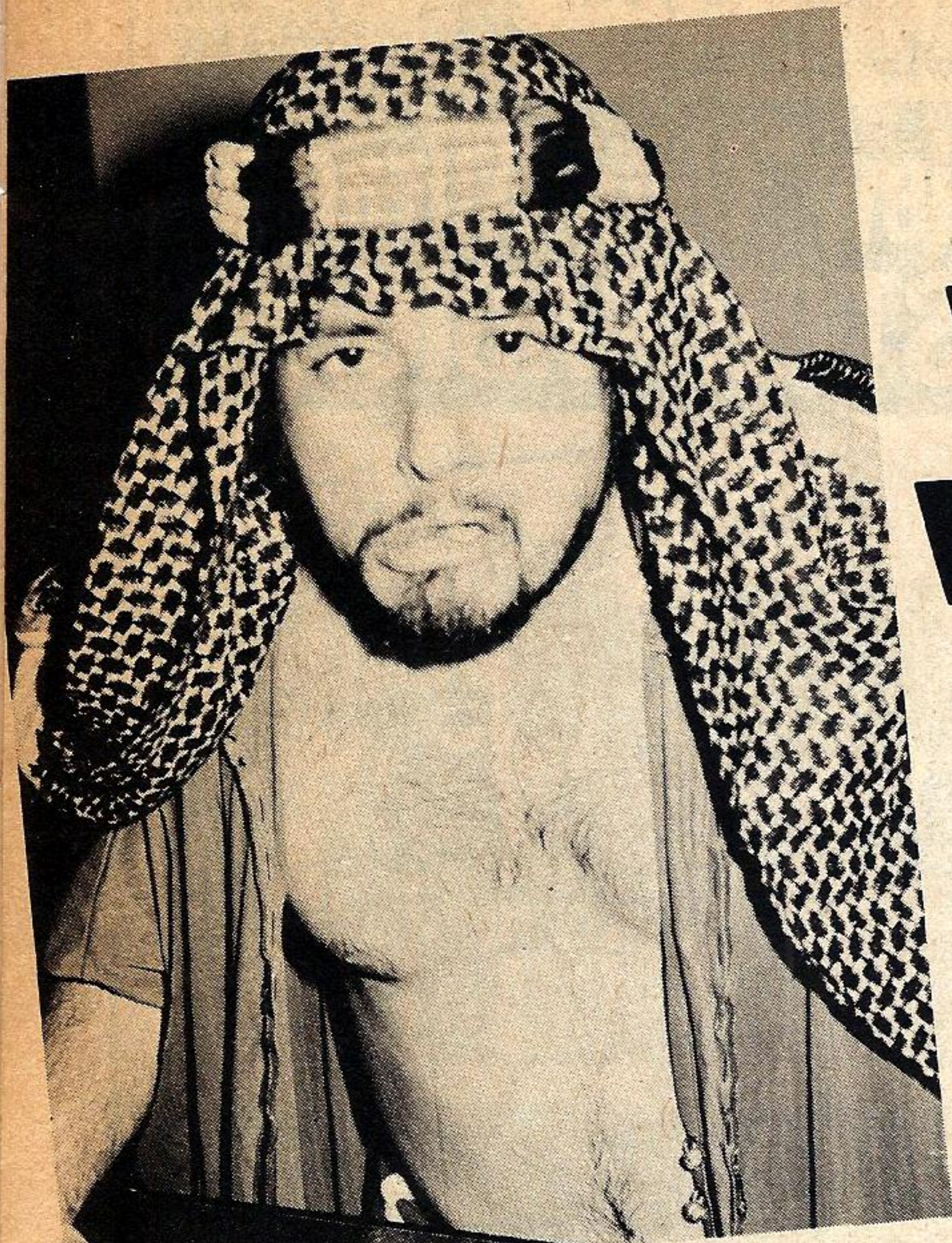


PHOTOS BY BRAD MCFARLIN

What strange set of events led to the titanic battle between hated Ox Baker and reprehensible Buggy McGraw? Read this story to find out why truth is not only stranger than fiction, but so much more terrifying!

Photos By Gary Kamensack
Gary Mancuso

THE WRESTLER WHO CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE A SINGLE MATCH!



Above left: It is win or starve for wrestler Abdul Shi-Kar. If the wealthy Arabians who back him become displeased, he must go back to begging. Left: Gilbert Geurreo is the victim of Shi-Kar's "Balthazar chinlock."

Abdul Shi-kar wrestles every match as if his life depended upon the outcome. And you know something? It does!

MANY WRESTLERS ARE willing to let the mideast keep its oil. Just as long as it takes back Abdul Shi-Kar.

Abdul Shi-Kar is a one-man mid-east war who has been unleashed against American wrestlers. His speed and strength have made him feared in a short period of time.

Gilbert Guerro, who has wrestled Abdul recently, recalls, "He comes charging out of the corner and never stops. His wild eyes are popping out of his skull. He becomes a whirlwind of activity. He screams some gibberish and starts sailing around the ring. You're not sure what's happening, but you're hurting all over."

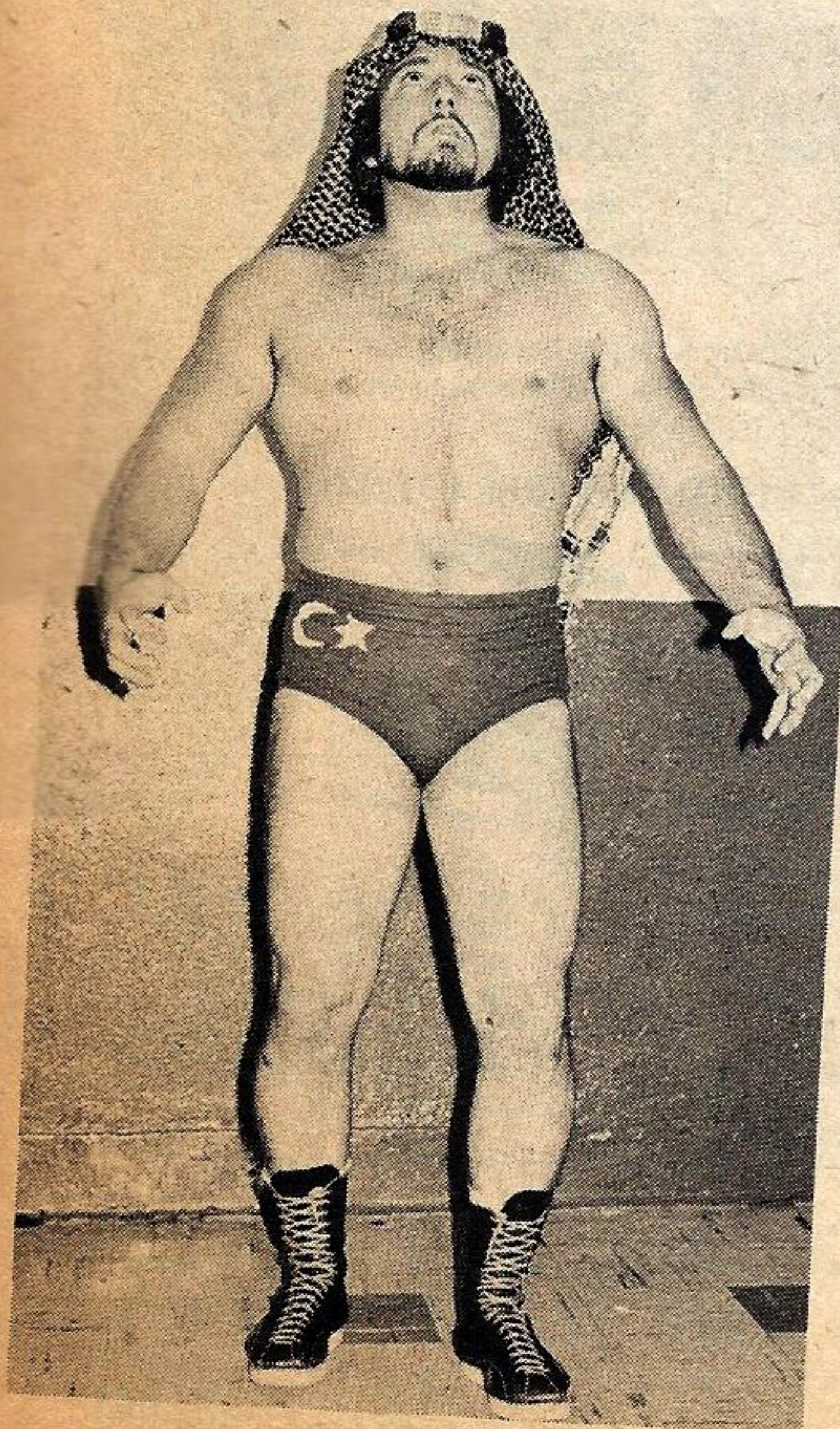
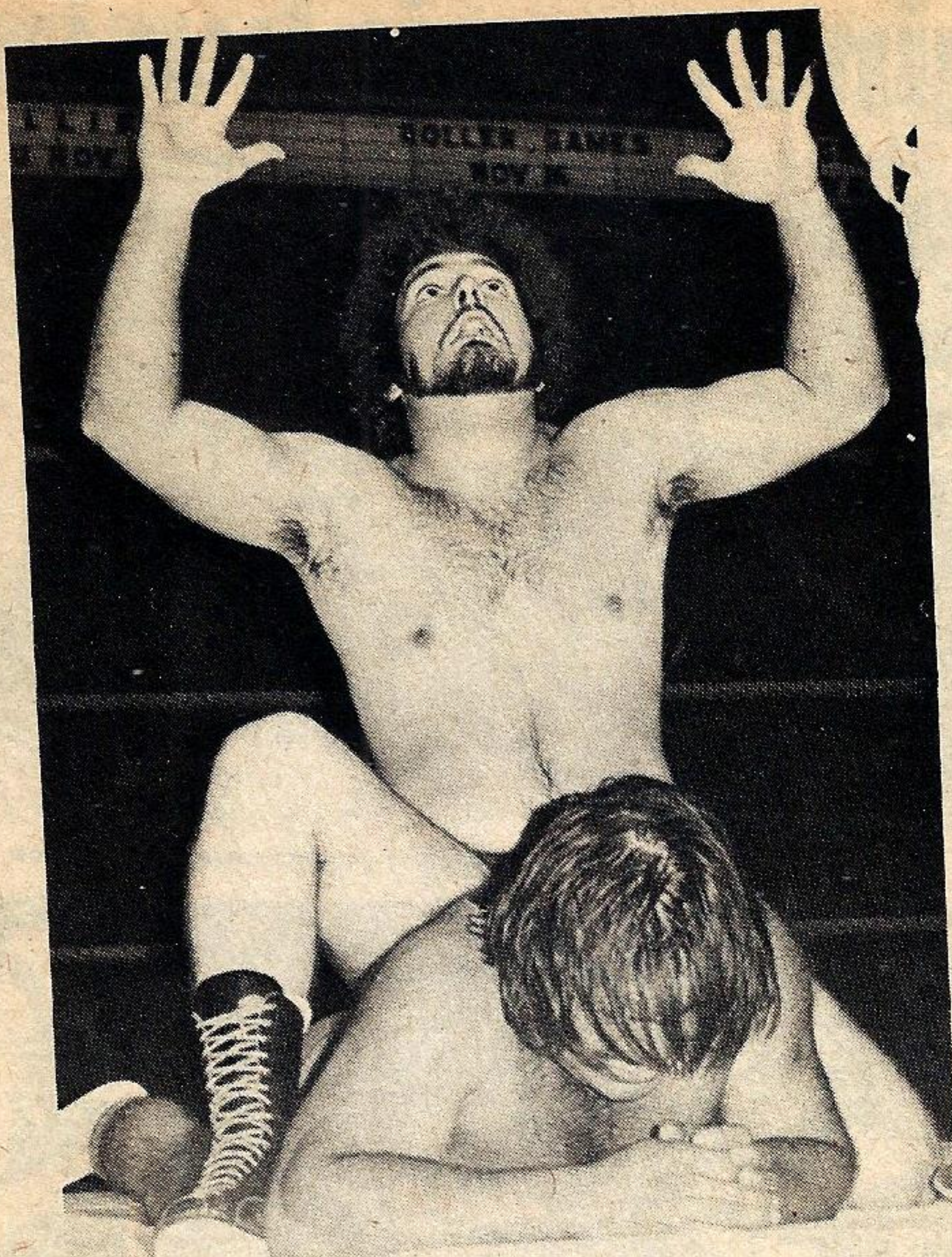
Shi-Kar is paying the world back for a life where he hasn't known what's happening, but it's hurt all over.

As a child, Shi-Kar lived in a palace in Alexandria, Egypt. At the outbreak of World War II, his parents allied themselves with the resistance against the Nazis. Within weeks of the

(Continued on page 12)

LOSE A SINGLE MATCH *(Continued from Page 10)*

Abdul seeks the aid of Allah as fans boo his dirty tactics against Gilbert Geurreo (right). Prayer is a very special part of Abdul's life. He goes into deep prayer before each match (below). Shi-Kar has stated that he will kill a man "before I fight another dog for bones in the street."



Nazi occupation, Abdul's father was dead, and he and his mother were forced to flee to the desert.

After wandering for a short time, the two refugees came upon a Bedouin tribe. Desperate for food and shelter, Abdul's mother was forced to marry a shepherd of the tribe. The frail woman, used to servants and splendor, couldn't stand the strain of desert life. She died within a year, with her son Abdul at her side. Her husband was searching the village for another woman to be his wife.

Shi-Kar couldn't stand to stay with the shepherd after his mother's death, so he traveled back to Alexandria. The young boy, unskilled and hungry, became one of the city's thousands of beggars.

It was then that Nessim Justine found him. Justine was the organizer of the Balthazar, a group that pits two starving boys against each other. The boys are told that the winner of a no-holds-barred wrestling match gets food, drink, and shelter for a week. The loser gets turned out to the streets, no matter what condition

he's in.

Shi-Kar was more than happy to participate. From the Bedouins, he had learned the hard way, by being the victim, how to wrestle, and he was too hungry to care what happened to the loser.

The first few times, Shi-Kar was left in the street bleeding and battered. But following his first few defeats, Abdul gained victory after victory. He was the most successful boy ever seen in the Balthazar. It became harder and harder to find beggars willing to wrestle against him. There were too many cracked skulls and broken bones on the street.

It became obvious that Shi-Kar was dominating the Balthazar and threatening its existence. Justine took him aside one evening and told him he was through. He left the building shocked and scared.

He was walking down the street when he heard a voice call, "Shi-Kar! Shi-Kar!" He was to quickly learn that the voice belonged to Narouz Clea, one of his admirers.

Clea told the astonished youth, "Some of your admirers in the Balthazar have a proposition for you. For 75% of the profits, we will send you around the world, wrestling. We will support you in style, and you will get everything you need or want. If you find our offer unsatisfactory, there is always begging."

After haggling over the financial arrangements, Abdul Shi-Kar was wrestling 35% for himself and 65% for his backers, who called themselves, "The Scobey."

And so the Scobey sent Abdul Shi-Kar to the United States. And they have kept their promise. Shi-Kar lives like a sultan as long as he wins. The rules of the Balthazar still hold.

Shi-Kar wrestles well, with a cruel efficiency. Many of his opponents claim his tactics are brutally dirty. Abdul doesn't really disagree.

"I must win if I am to live!" Shi-Kar says with determination. "There is only one way the Scobey will not want to send me back to the street if I win. Therefore, I will win. That is all that matters. The end justifies the means. If somebody gets hurt, that is unfortunate. But if it is necessary, it is necessary."

Abdul stares into space and adds, "I have seen little children fight dogs for bones. I'll kill a man before I fight another dog." □

STANDO



KNEES BUCKLING FROM the pain, Billy Robinson crumpled to the canvas. Trapped in Terry Funk's headlock, his agony was forcing him into one of the most desperate measures ever taken by a professional wrestler.

Billy did not fall to the mat simply because of his pain. As he fell, he twisted his body in a premeditated fashion. Risking a broken neck, he kicked his legs out and

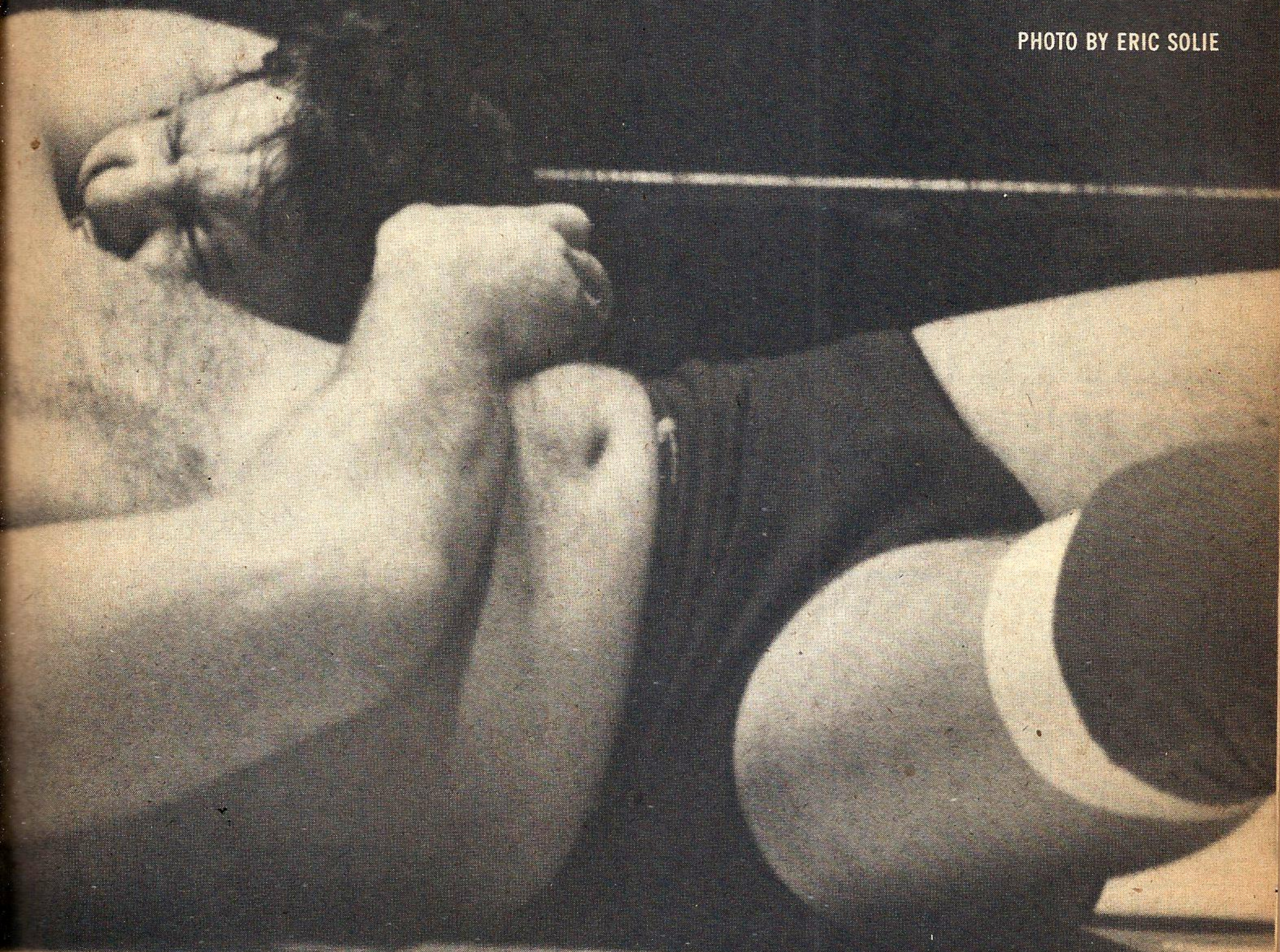
wound up facing in the opposite direction. This allowed him to reach up and put Funk in a headlock. The only drawback to this maneuver was it didn't free him from Funk's grasp.

So the two men, facing head-to-toe, squeezed each other's head with every ounce of strength at their command. They groaned and gasped for air; their faces turned beet red. Still, neither man would

FF!

Terry Funk and
Billy Robinson are
two great wrestlers,
athletes evenly
matched in skill
and power.
Courage is the only
way to decide a
match between them!

PHOTO BY ERIC SOLIE



submit. It became apparent the match would be decided by heart, not power.

It seemed like an eternity these two men were locked in this mutually torturous grip. The referee watched with his mouth hanging open, awed by this much absorbed agony. Not a single sound which could be construed as plea for submission was heard.

The match ended the only way possible: the time limit expired. At the sound of the bell, the two men released their holds. Too weak to immediately get on their feet, they rolled on the mat and gasped for air. They had both won a remarkable victory. They had proven courage can conquer pain. It is the greatest achievement towards which any human can aspire. □

CHUCKLES

George "The Animal" Steele is not exactly well known for his intelligence. He's the first one to admit this. "Even in kindergarten," George says sadly, "I flunked milk."

Handsome Jim Valiant says he was raised in a very tough neighborhood. "If we saw a cat with a tail," Jim told us, "we knew it was a tourist!"

"I just bought a four acre farm," Chief Jay Strongbow was telling his friend, Peter Maivia. "I have an acre of apple trees, then I have an empty acre. I have an acre of pear trees, and then I have another empty acre."

"Why two empty acres?" Maivia wondered.

"Well," said the Chief, "I gotta have some place to throw the pits!"

Popular Puerto Rican star Pedro Morales swears there was a time he could speak English

as well as he spoke Spanish. "It was when I was a year old."

Former NWA champion Terry Funk is a man who admits to hating Los Angeles. Terry claims he once saw this sign on the outskirts of town: "You are now leaving the City of Los Angeles. Resume normal breathing."

According to Ken Patera, the dressing rooms in the Boston Garden are much too hot. "After shaving, I put some cornflour on my face," Kenny reports. "When I perspired, I broke out in muffins!"

Captain Louis Albano was in one of his rare joking moods. He told us the story of a wrestler he once managed who was less than successful.

"He was a crossword-puzzle grappler," Albano said. "He entered the ring vertical and left horizontal!"

(Continued on page 63)

Even in the violent world of wrestling, there is still a time for laughter. Here are the comic anecdotes that never seem to get written down, but are just as important to wrestling as any maneuver. Relax a little, and get ready to laugh!

Being Bob Backlund's friend is important to Dino Bravo. But what is even more important to Dino is the WWWF title, now held by Bobby. Can their personal friendship remain intact if their professional commitments cause them to finally clash?

EVEN FRIENDSHIP MUST subliminate itself beneath the demands of ambition, the enticing torch of fame which beckons all wrestlers once they enter the squared circle.

Such a temptation has seized Dino Bravo. He stands encircled in the smoke of ambition, produced by the gusting flame which is the WWWF title.

Unfortunately, that candle is

presently held by Bravo's very close friend, Bob Backlund, which only complicates Dino's dreams.

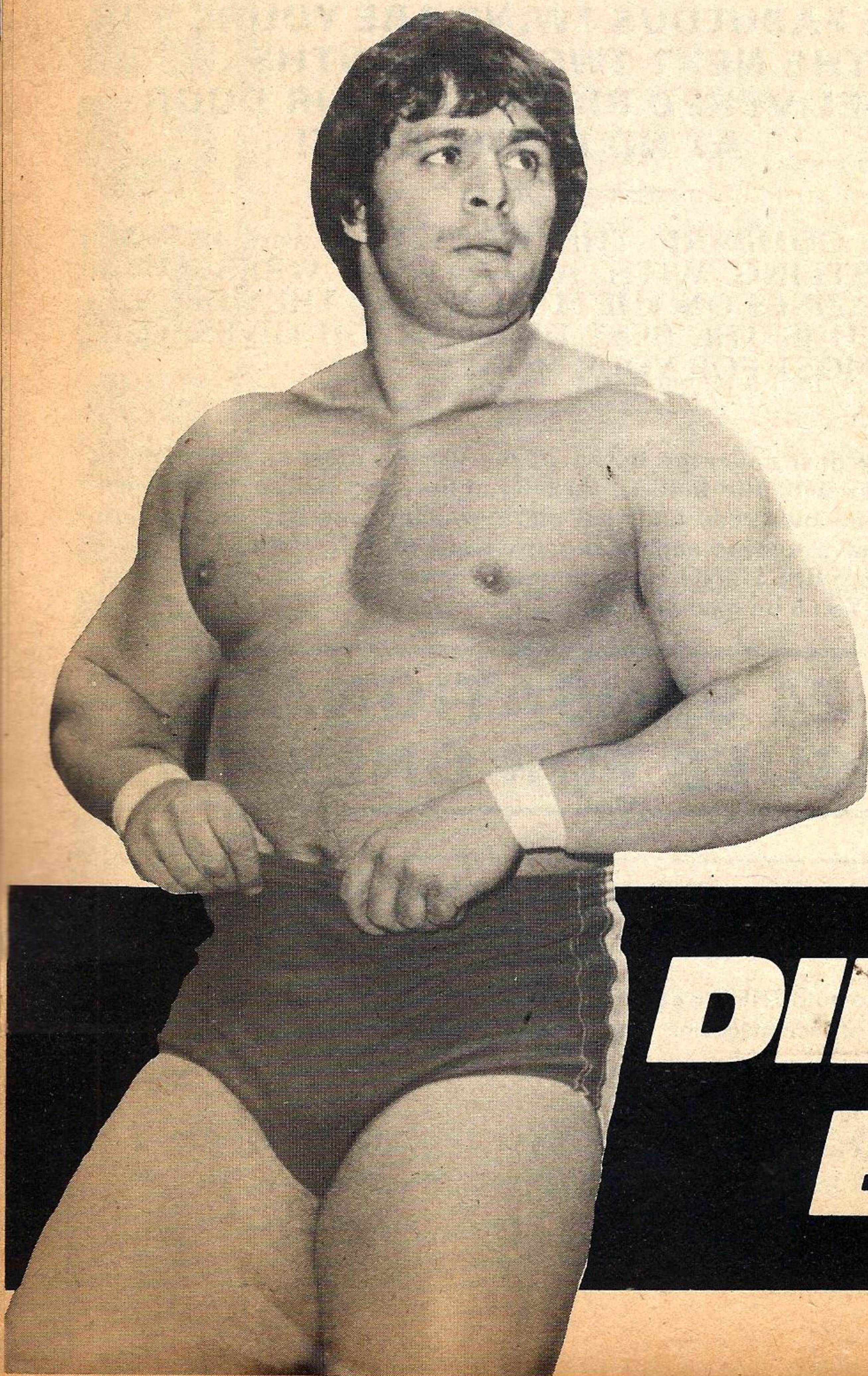
"I want to make everyone understand, right off the bat, that Bob Backlund is a close friend of mine. I know this is going to sound like I've declared a war on Bob or something stupid like that, but it isn't like that at all," Bravo said emphatically.

"It's just that since Dominic and I lost the WWWF tag team title to the Lumberjacks, I've been exclusively on my own.

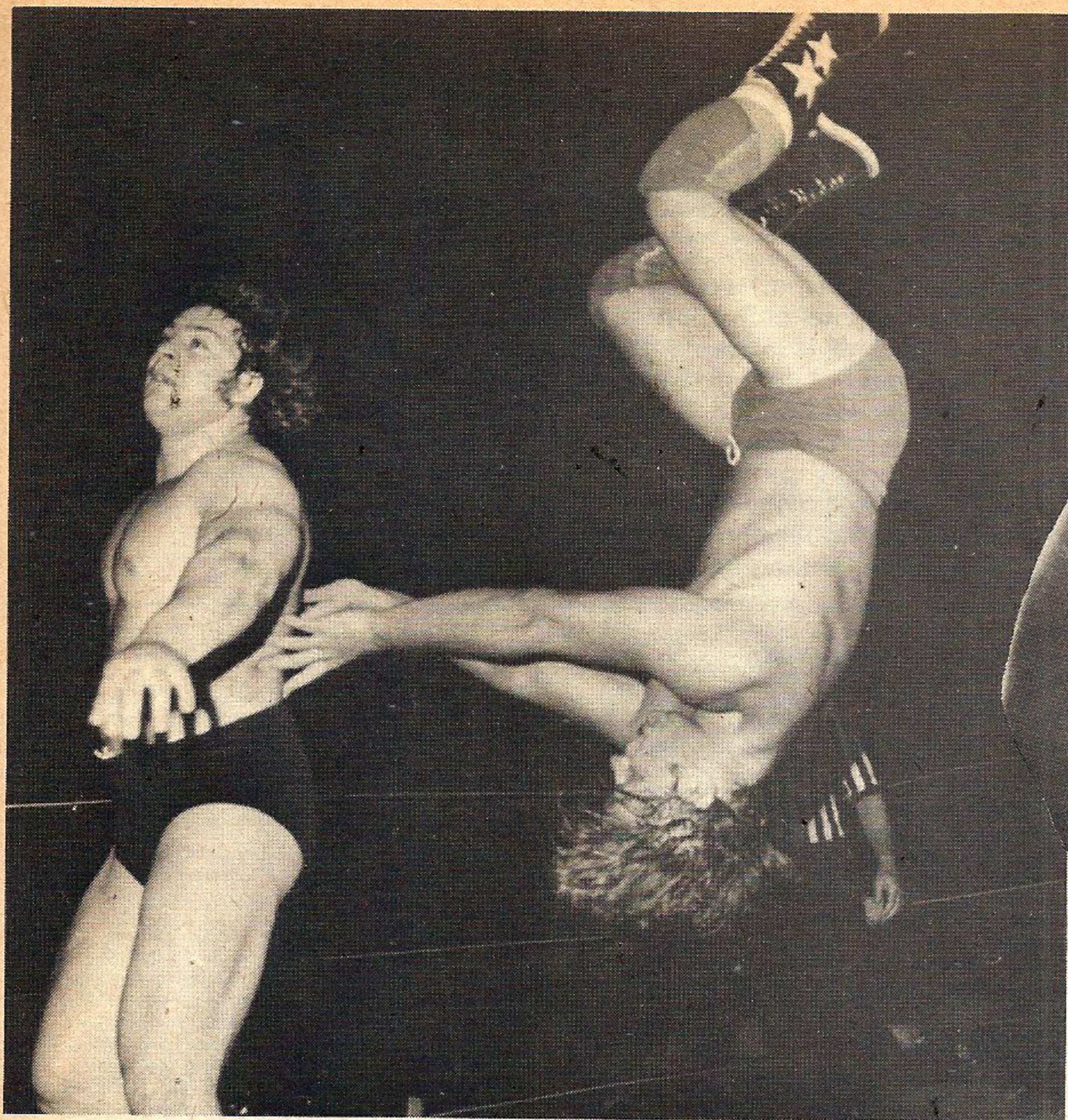
"When you're wrestling on your own, you want to feel like you're moving toward a goal, that all the hard work and aggravation is worth it. So I want to set my sights on the WWWF belt, which poses a problem."

This is not the first time that two friends have competed for the same belt. Nevertheless, it creates an awkwardness between both men.

"No, it doesn't bother me that Dino wants a title shot," Backlund shrugged. "Why should it? He's an excellent wrestler and he deserves a shot. I wouldn't respect him if he didn't want to wrestle me."



**DINO BR
BACKL**



Dino backdrops Dick Slater (left) in a match just weeks before Dino came to the WWWF. Dino would like to wrestle WWWF champion Bob Backlund (below).

But how would you feel squaring off against a good friend with the belt on the line?

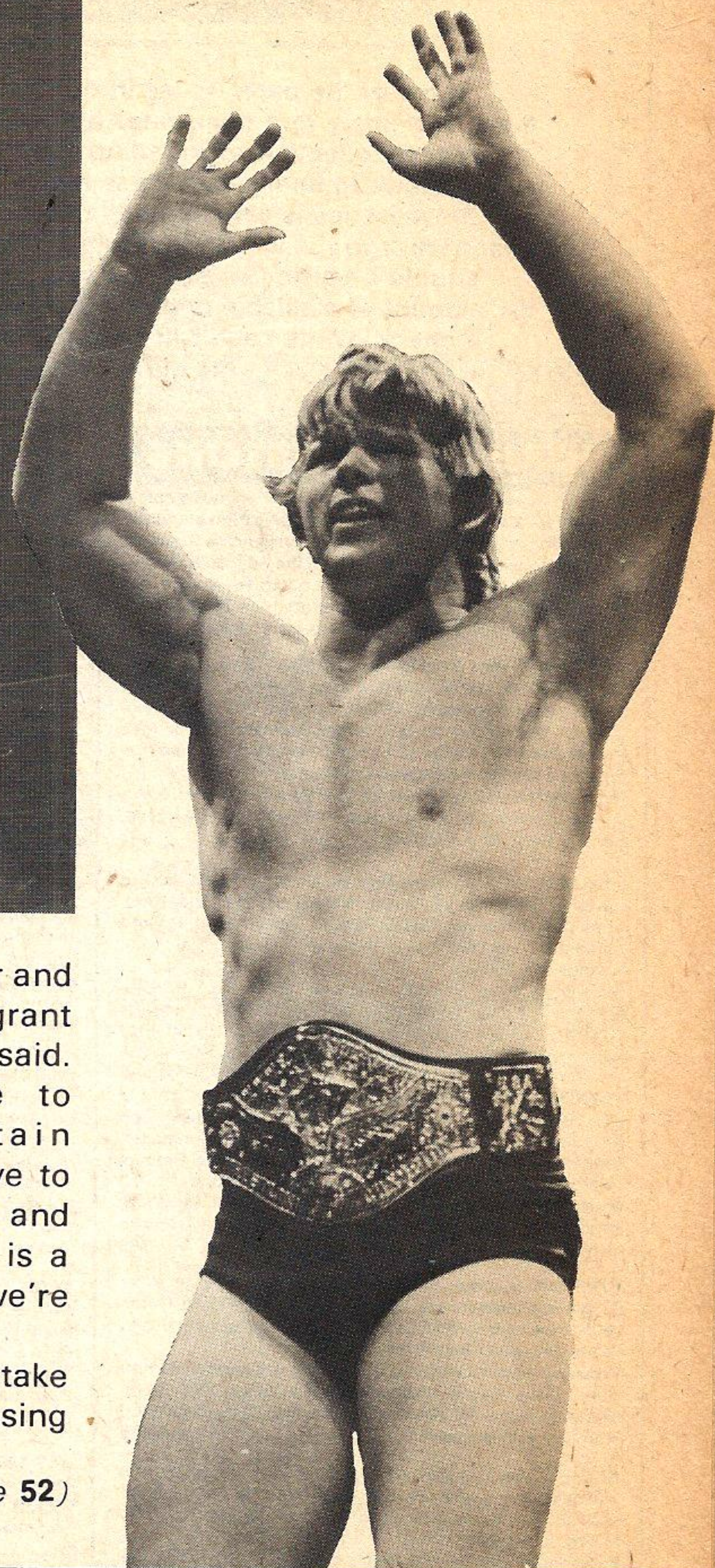
"Oh, you always feel a little strange when a guy you're close to is after your title. I imagine I'd feel a little funny, but that would last for just a short while, it would all dissolve," Backlund said.

Arnold Skoaland, Backlund's manager, expresses a more business-like approach to a possible Backlund-Bravo match.

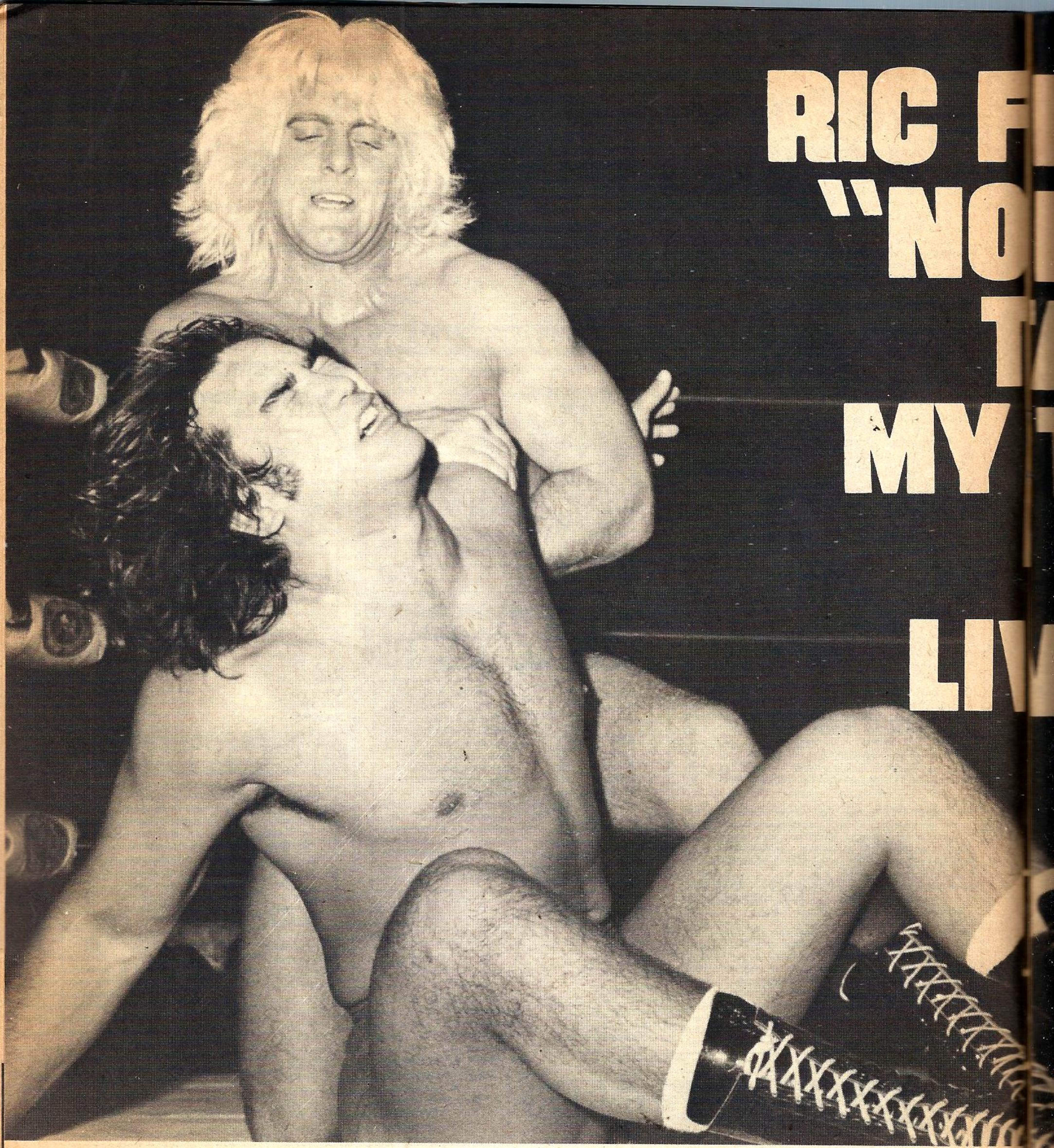
"Bravo is a top contender and it is only fair that Backlund grant him a title shot," Skoaland said. "Of course, you have to understand that certain financial details would have to be worked out. I know Bob and Dino are friends, but this is a federation championship we're talking about."

"Friendship tends to take second-place when discussing titles."

(Continued on page 52)



**BRavo: "I WANT
UND... NOW!"**



RIC FLAIR "NO TA MY LIV

It's a dangerous idea to make an enemy of Ric Flair. Rick Steamboat isn't afraid of danger. No one has to tell Rick brave men often wind up as tragic memories

PHOTOS BY GENE GORDON

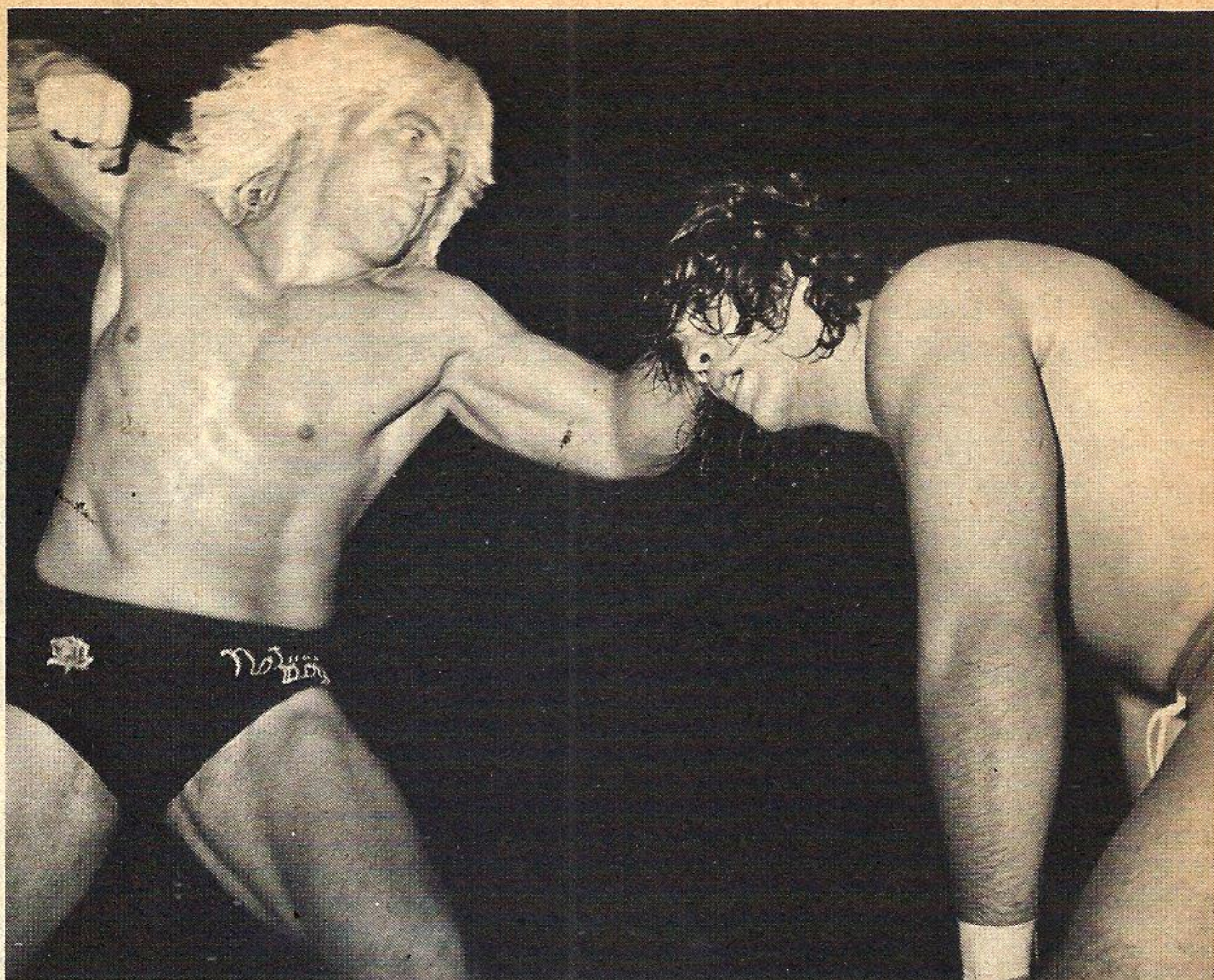
RIC FLAIR WAS in complete control. His temper was in check. He kept his voice purposely low, so as to make

everyone strain to hear what he had to say.

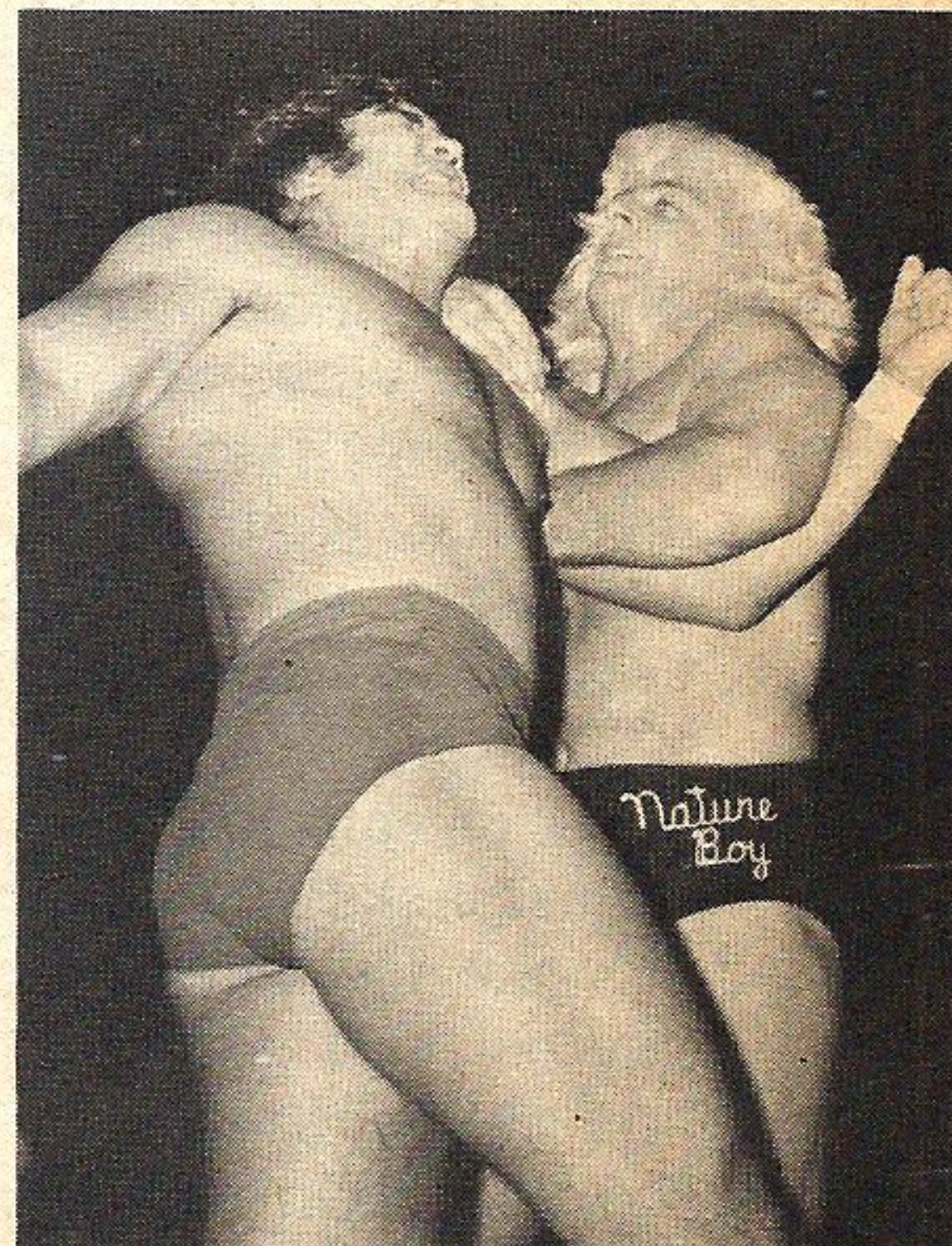
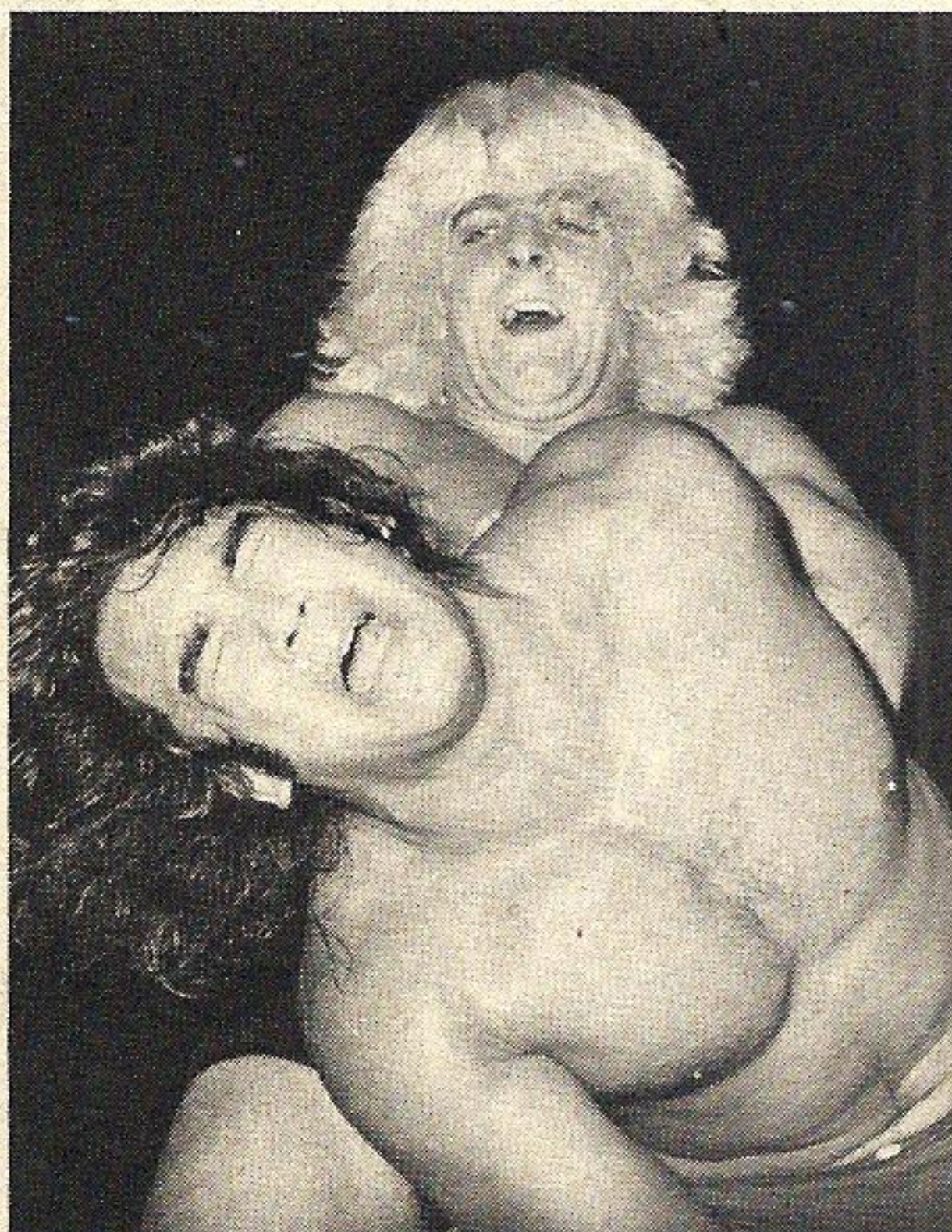
And every muscle in his body was as tight as a drum.

This man was tense. He was nervous. He was shaking on the inside. But he was putting on a good front. He did not yell. He

LAIR: BODY MAKES TITLE AND LIVES!"



Left: Ric Flair makes Steamboat cry out in horrible agony as he wrenches Rick's arm. Above: "Nature Boy" takes his best shot and prepares to pummel the U.S. Champion. Below left: Steamboat's left arm becomes Flair's prime target as he becomes the victim of a brutal hammerlock. Below right: Flair works on the arm, hoping to tear it out of its socket!



did not run around. He sat in a chair. His fists were clenched, and he did not blink his eyes. He was making a pronouncement.

"Let me make this perfectly understood," Ric intoned quietly. "No man takes my title and lives. This means Rick Steamboat must be destroyed. I

hope to make myself clear."

Though his voice was never raised above a whisper, no one could help but catch the intensity with which he had uttered those 27 words. He was serious. No one had ever seen him so serious.

Ric Flair is given to doing a bit too much boasting from time to time. In fact, all that has to happen is for him to become the center of attention. Then he just

starts. He will sing his own praises loud and clear. He will make idle threats. He will denounce any wrestler who happens to have displeased him for whatever reason. In short, he likes to talk a lot—about himself and his purported greatness.

But this time, it was all different. Those who had gathered to hear Flair speak this. No one had ever provoked this kind of anger in Ric. There

had to be a reason.

There was. And to Flair, it was an excellent reason.

There is an interesting history to this whole situation. It deals mostly with Rick Steamboat.

Over the past few months, Steamboat has become one of the most watched wrestlers in the sport. This young man has done phenomenally as a rookie. He has taken on some really tough competition. He has proven his ability. He has been hailed as one of the best of the new young superstars—and with good reason.

At the opposite end of the wrestling spectrum, Ric Flair reigns supreme. He is a talented young man; there is no question about that. But he is also one of the most notorious rule-breakers in the sport, a sad description to hang on any man so young. But Flair chooses to be how he is, and no one can stop that.

Ric Flair was owner of the U.S. title. Steamboat challenged him for that honor (against the advice of his friends, who thought it would be suicidal for Rick to take on Flair). Steamboat won. That surprised everyone—especially Ric Flair.

It can never be said that Flair takes these setbacks in a calm, rational manner. He screamed at the referee and fans for several minutes after the match, claiming he had been robbed, that Steamboat had cheated, that the officials had been bribed. None of this was true, but Ric said it anyway. Then he vowed to regain his belt at the first possible opportunity.

"I made a major blunder in this match," said Flair that night. "I didn't take this turkey seriously enough. I know better now. The next time we wrestle, he is not going to leave the ring under his own power. They'll

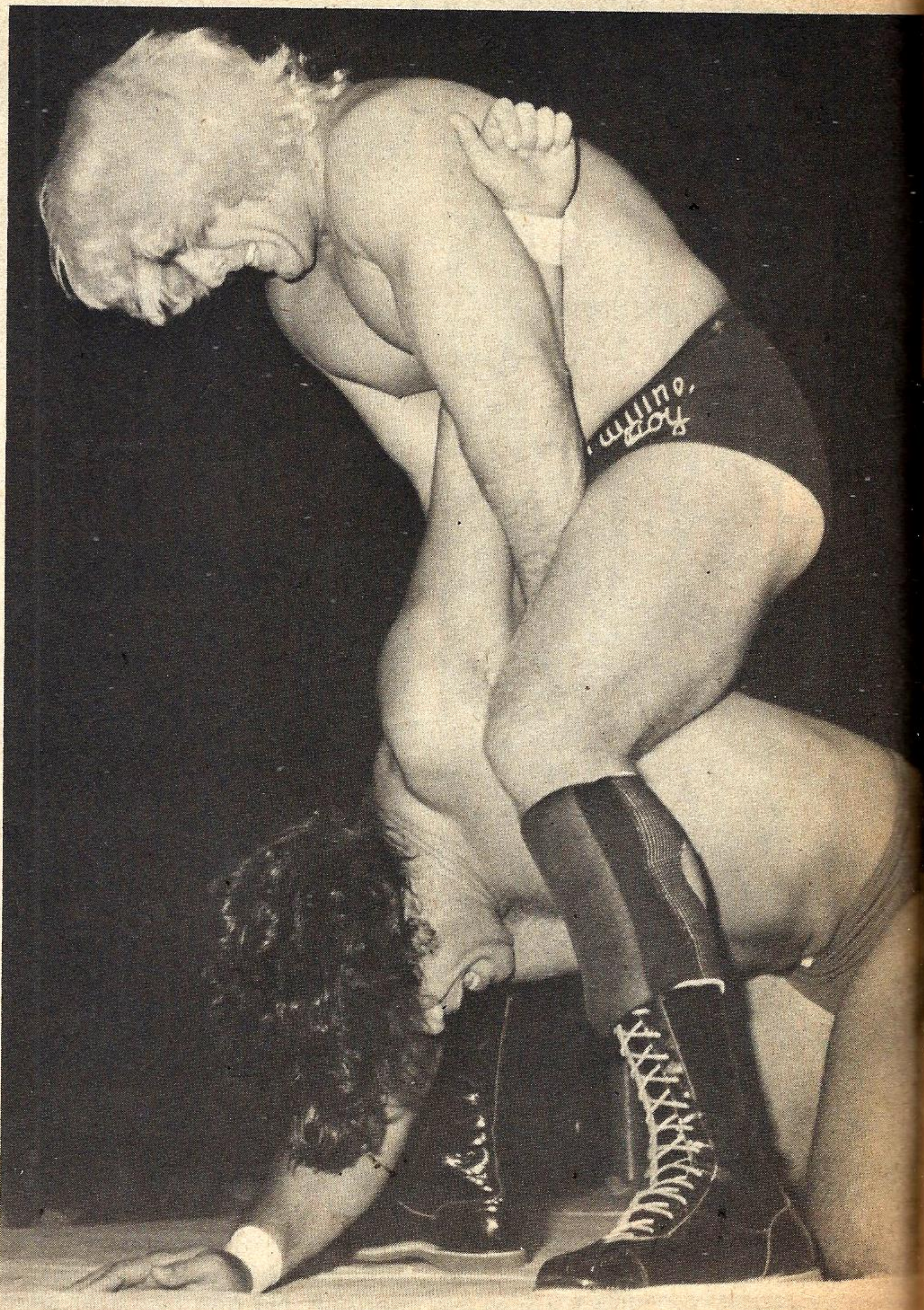
have to carry him out on a stretcher!"

And so Ric Flair became more savage than he had ever been in his entire life. He was furious at Steamboat. But his anger clouded his judgement. In the first rematch, Ric made many mistakes. There was no

question that Steamboat was the victor.

It was after that match Flair made that solemn pledge to destroy Rick Steamboat. He was rational. He did not make the promise in the heat of anger. He was coldly calculating how

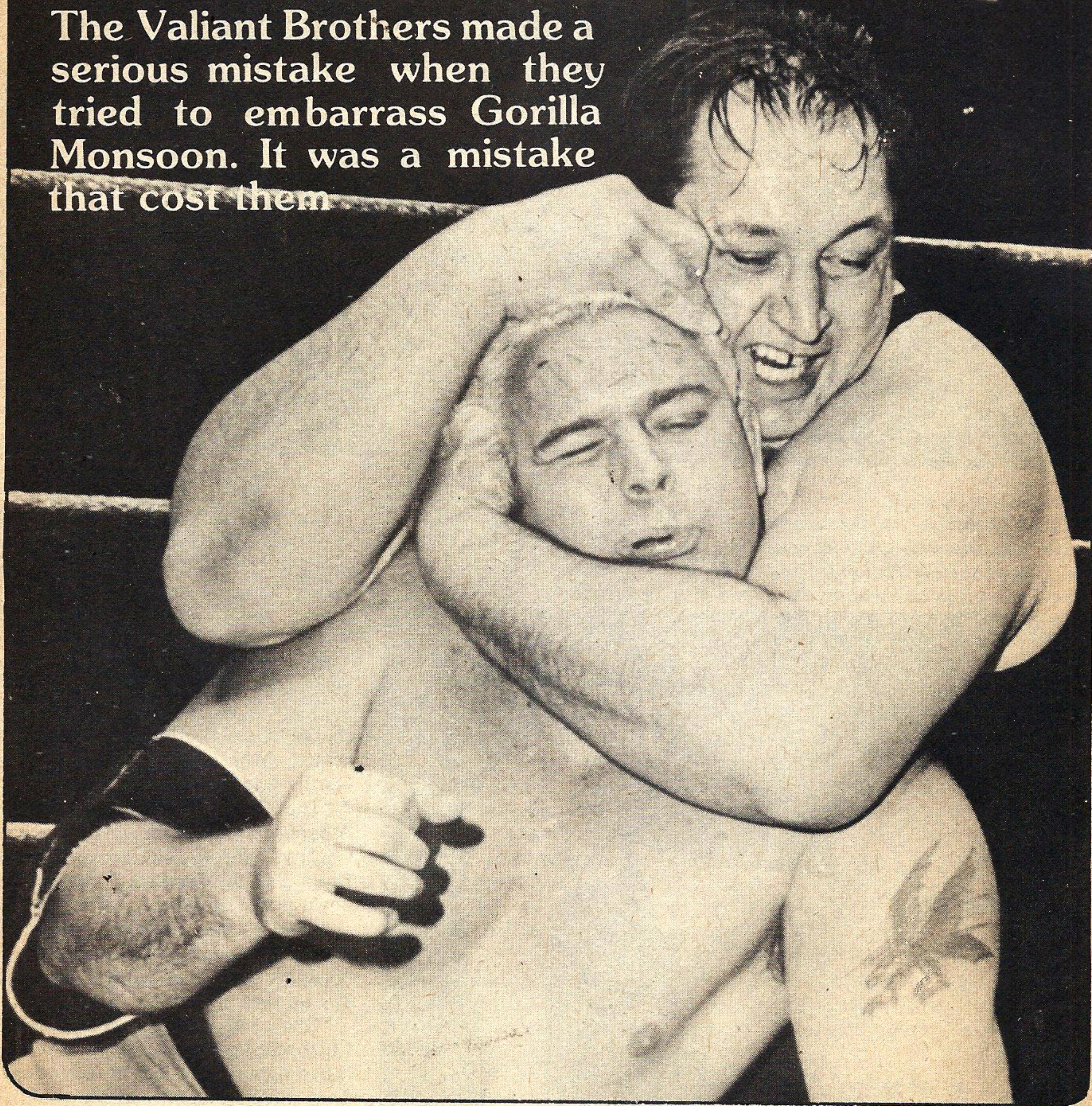
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It is obvious that Flair can apply holds and stay within the rulebook. But in a few moments, Steamboat will rally and unleash a brilliant attack. Flair will retaliate by throwing out all the rules and becoming a vicious brawler.

WHEN GORILLA MONSOON GOT REVENGE AGAINST THE VALIANTS

The Valiant Brothers made a serious mistake when they tried to embarrass Gorilla Monsoon. It was a mistake that cost them



L'AW 'N ORDER. That's what Bruno Sammartino and Chief Jay Strongbow had hoped they'd get in their third match against Lou Albano's Valiant Brothers at Madison Square Garden.

And to ensure they'd get some fair refereeing, Gorilla Monsoon was

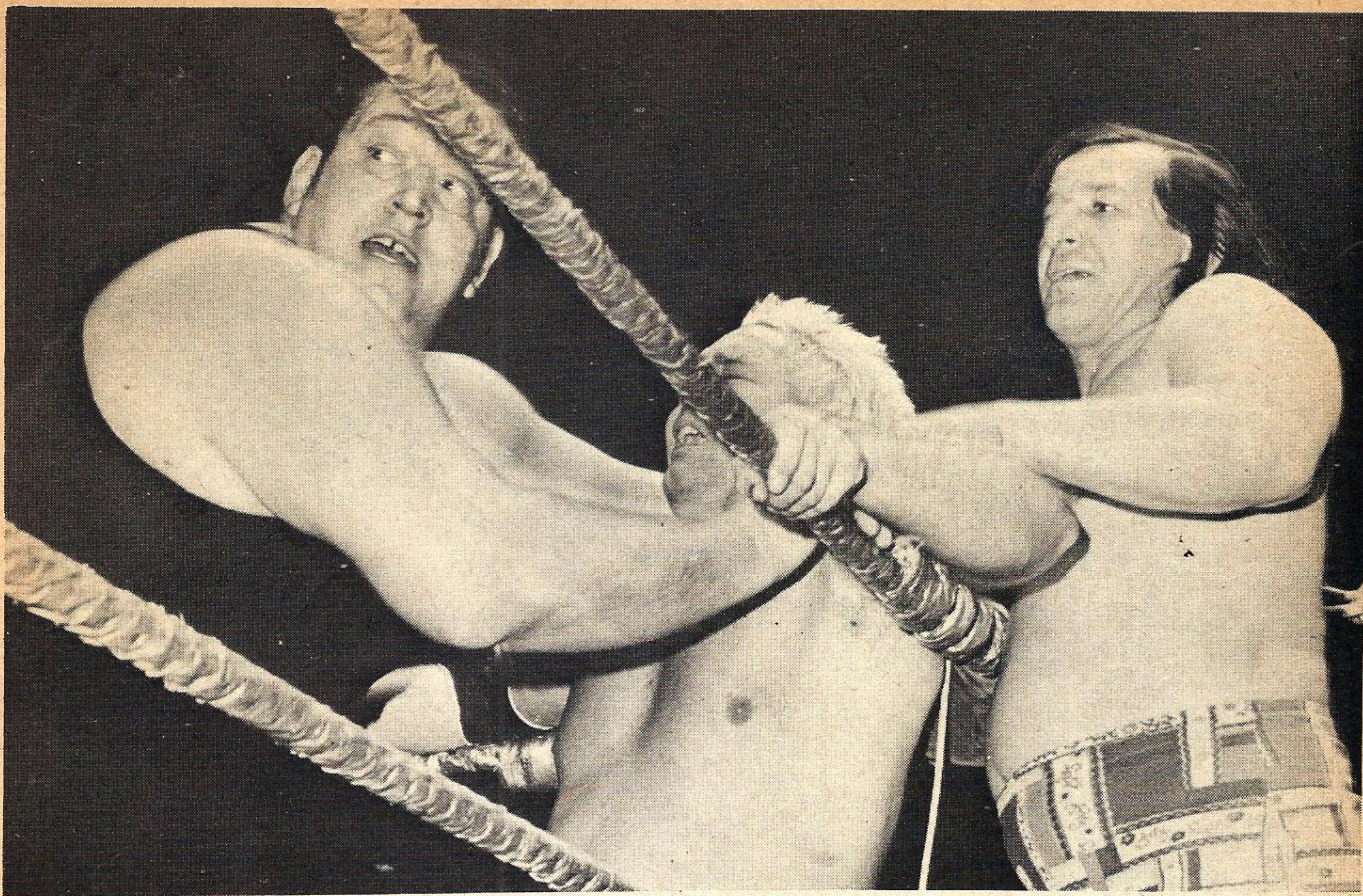
summoned by the World Wide Wrestling Federation to referee the match.

"Not only will I keep the Valiants orderly during the match," Monsoon said, "but I'll also make sure Bruno and the Chief stay within the rule book."

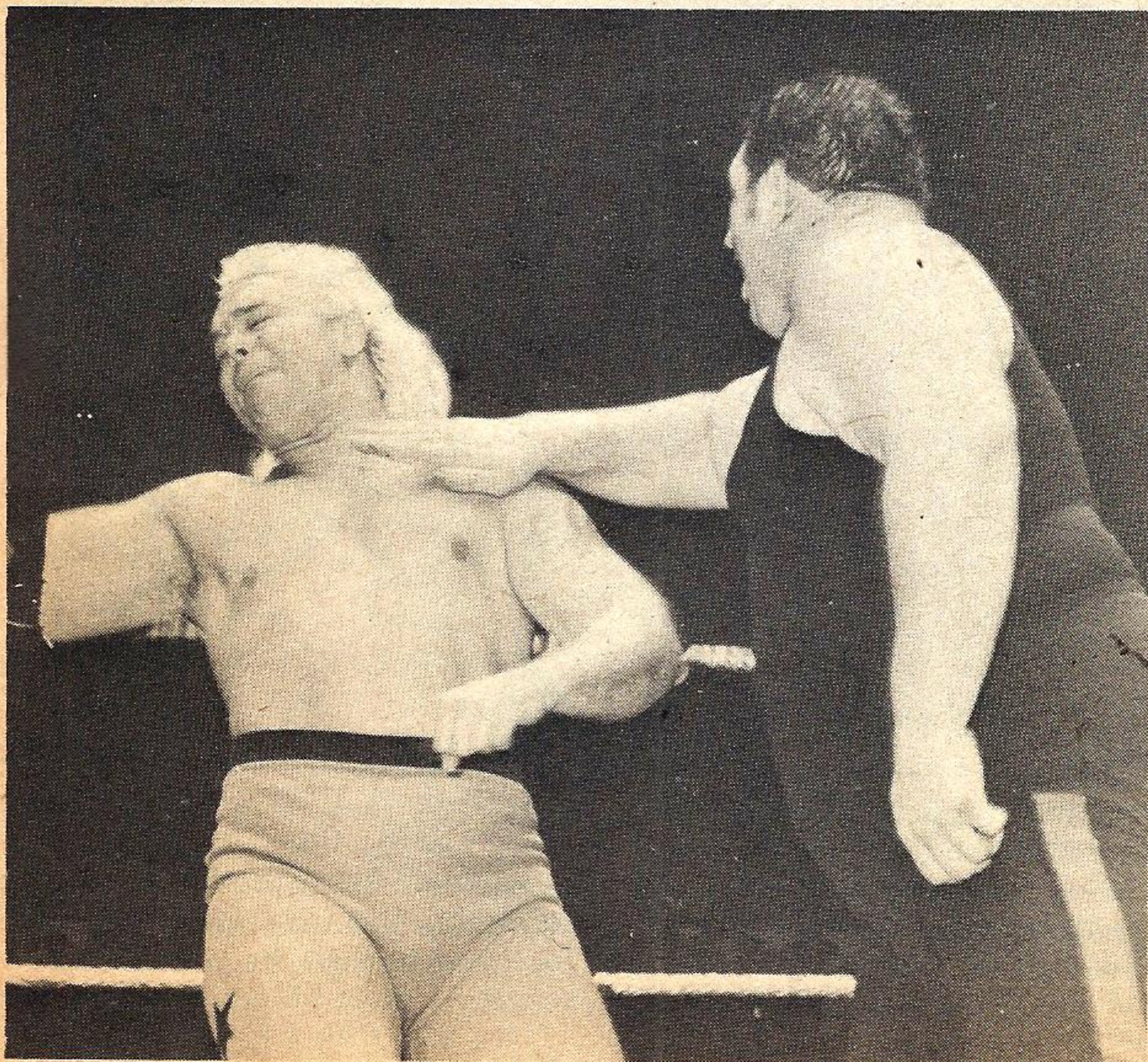
For one fall things were going pretty

good. But then, with the Valiants down one fall, they decided to get themselves disqualified so they'd retain their title. And what better way to do that than by attacking the referee—Gorilla Monsoon!

They saw their opening and sneak attacked Monsoon. One Valiant kept



Above: Monsoon and Strongbow trap Jim Valiant in the corner and work the notorious grappler over mercilessly, like Valiant has done to so many before! Below: A raging Monsoon smashes a judo chop to Jim Valiant's neck, sending the blond wrestler reeling backwards.



Bruno and Strongbow busy while the other ripped Monsoon's shirt and stomped on him repeatedly. In a matter of seconds, the other Valiant brother was joining in the massacre. When Albano tried to run from the dressing room area to help, the police held him back.

Finally, Bruno and Strongbow chased them from the ring. They helped Monsoon to his feet. The Gorilla was fuming.

"The three of us should wrestle Albano and the Valiants here at the Garden!" Monsoon exclaimed as Bruno and the Chief tried to calm him down in the dressing room.

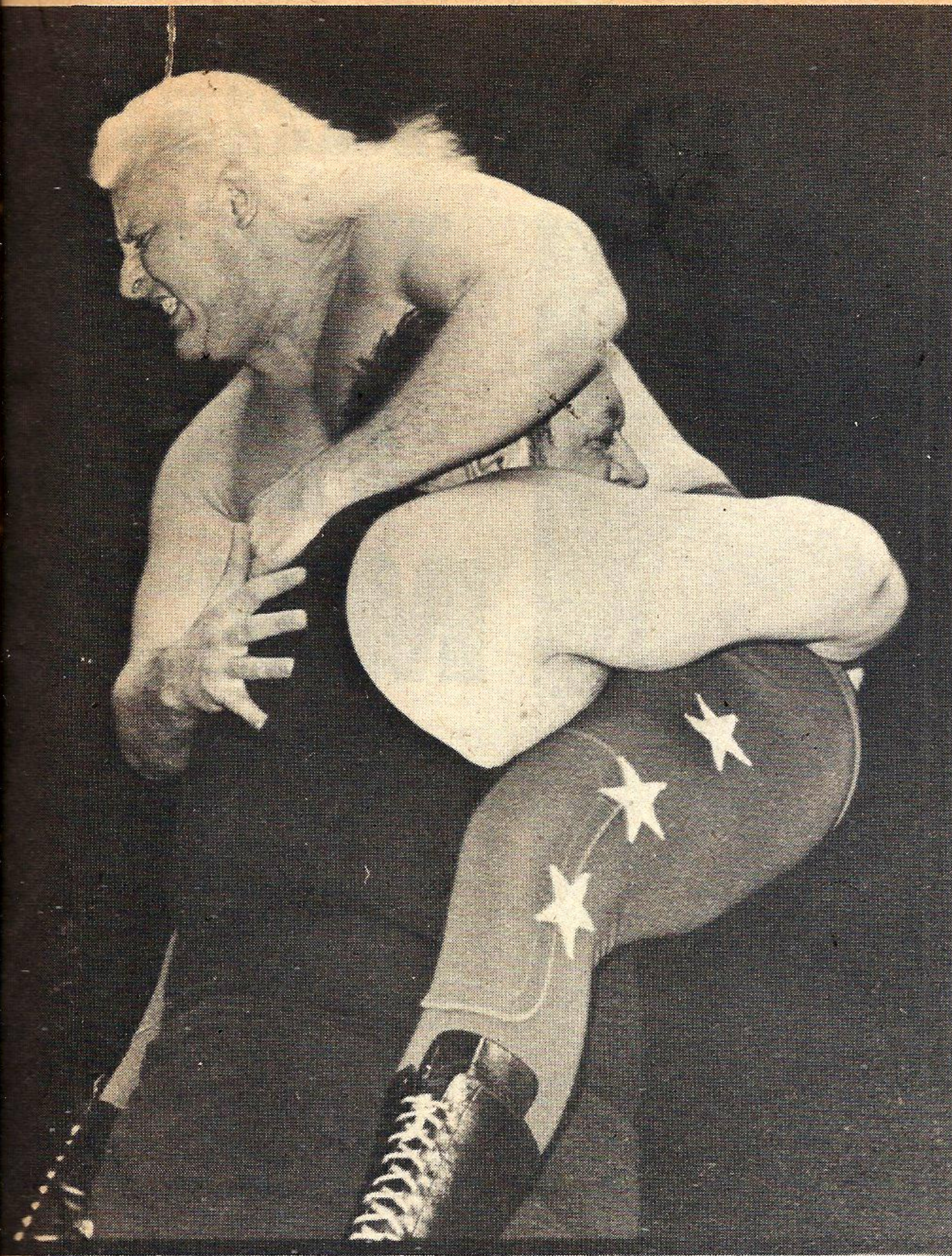
"That's impossible," Bruno's manager, Arnold Skoaland cut in. "Bruno's signed to wrestle someone else on the next card."

"Okay," Monsoon said. "Then the Chief and I want the match!"

Strongbow nodded in agreement. They understood why Bruno couldn't join them—and how badly he wanted to do that. But a contract is a contract and Bruno always honors his commitments.

Monsoon approached the promoters. Minutes later Gorilla and Chief got their answer.

"It's okay," they were told. "As long



as it's a non-title match. Albano does not want the title on the line."

"We don't care!" Monsoon said. "We've got a score to settle with them. That's all!" So the match was signed and sealed—and a few weeks later—delivered.

Interviewed just a few minutes before the match, Monsoon was asked if he was surprised at the Valiants' sneak attack during their match against Bruno and Strongbow.

"I was not surprised," he admitted. "They are fairly intelligent. And anything they don't know, Lou Albano tells them. They knew that in that match they had only two chances—slim and none.

"What they did was very clever. It saved the title for them. They were disqualified.

"We've trained hard for this match,

the Chief and I. And we've trained to fight brute force and quickness. That's the only thing that can beat them. They're gonna break the rules as much as they can. You can't expect to win in a match against the Valiants unless your side also goes against the rules at times. It's the only way to combat them."

The Chief and Monsoon confidently jogged down the aisle toward the ring. All the way to the ring they heard fans yelling, "Get 'em, Monsoon! Get revenge!" The majority of the crowd seemed on their side. A few were on the side of the Valiants.

It became evident early in the match that Monsoon and Strongbow were to have a night of revenge they'd never forget. The Valiants did score many times with their dirty tactics, but the special training methods employed by



Above: Monsoon's powerful bulk squeezes the Valiants into the corner and Strongbow leaps atop his partner and pounds away at the team with hard forearm smashes. Left: John Valiant squirms in a Monsoon bearhug!

Monsoon and Strongbow saw them walk away feeling satisfied.

"When the Valiants mess with us," Strongbow said, "they know they're not going against two guys who are interested in wrestling scientifically. We can wrestle their style, and after tonight, I am certain they won't want to wrestle us ever again."

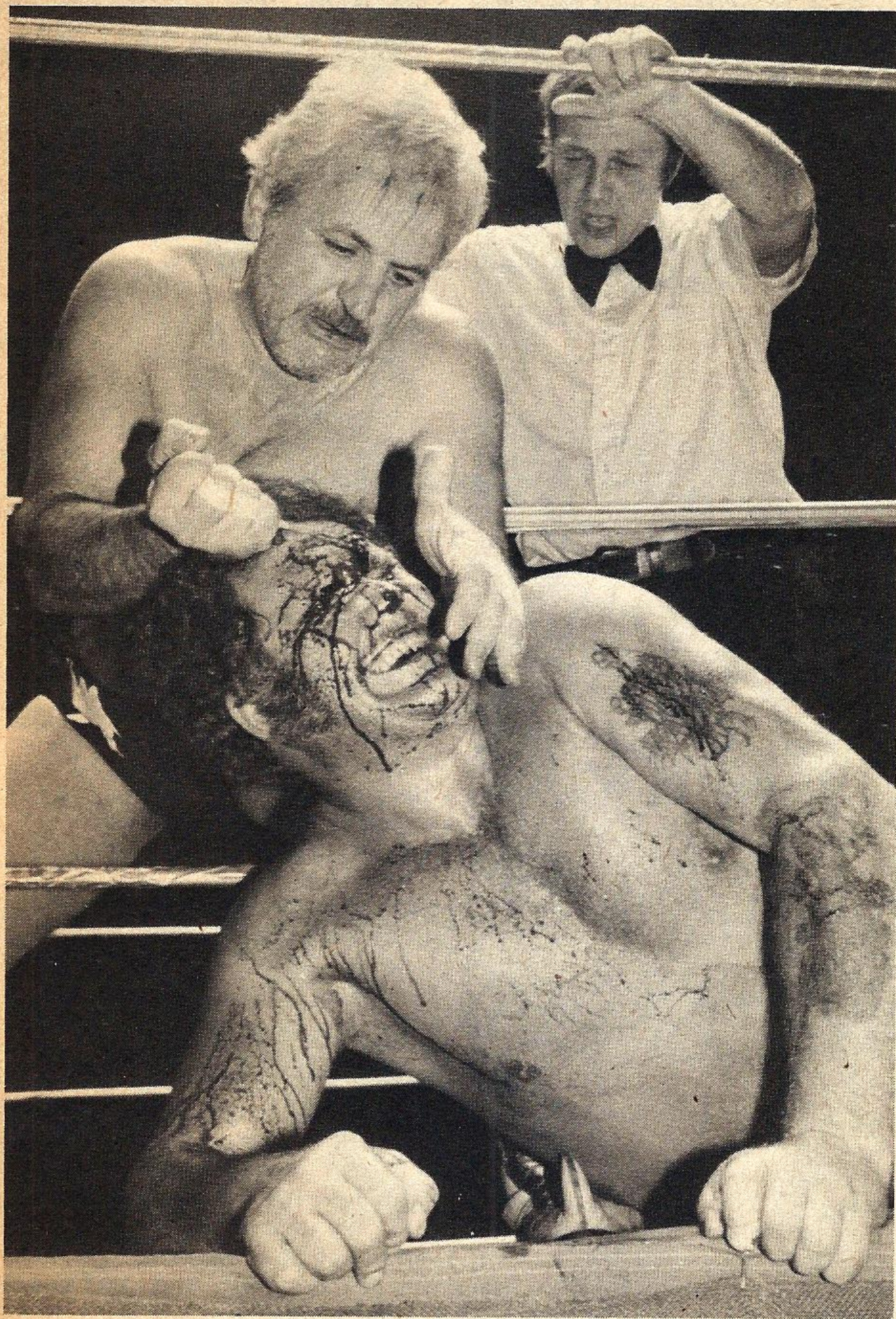
"Listen!" Lou Albano exclaimed. "They were the first ones to break the rules. We tried to wrestle the Indian and the blimp scientifically. But they wouldn't have any of it. You got a renegade and a crazy ape in that ring. They should be banned. They shouldn't be allowed in an arena!"

Monsoon summed things up this way.

"They can name call and cry all they want. But we fought fire with fire, and one day, if they have guts enough to put the title up against us, they'll lose those belts. I can guarantee that."

As this went to press, Albano and the Valiants were not making any overtures to defend the title against them. Interesting, isn't it! □

Harley Race Snarls:



Using a razor sharp foreign object, The Sheik rips the forehead of NWA champion Harley Race. Race is burning mad that we have called him a vicious rulebreaker in the past. "If you want to see viciousness, just take a look at what this madman did to my face!" exclaims the champion.

We've called Harley Race many unflattering things during his less than scientific title reign.

Harley is a proud man who feels every criticism is a knife shoved hard in his back.

He promised to go to any lengths to shut us up—and did!

"GET HELL MY B

HARLEY RACE WAS in a rage. He climbed atop an unsteady metal chair, his thick fingers clenched about a blue piece of paper. Looking around, then down at the paper, Race returned to the curious dressing room crowd, his dark eyes burning with intense anger.

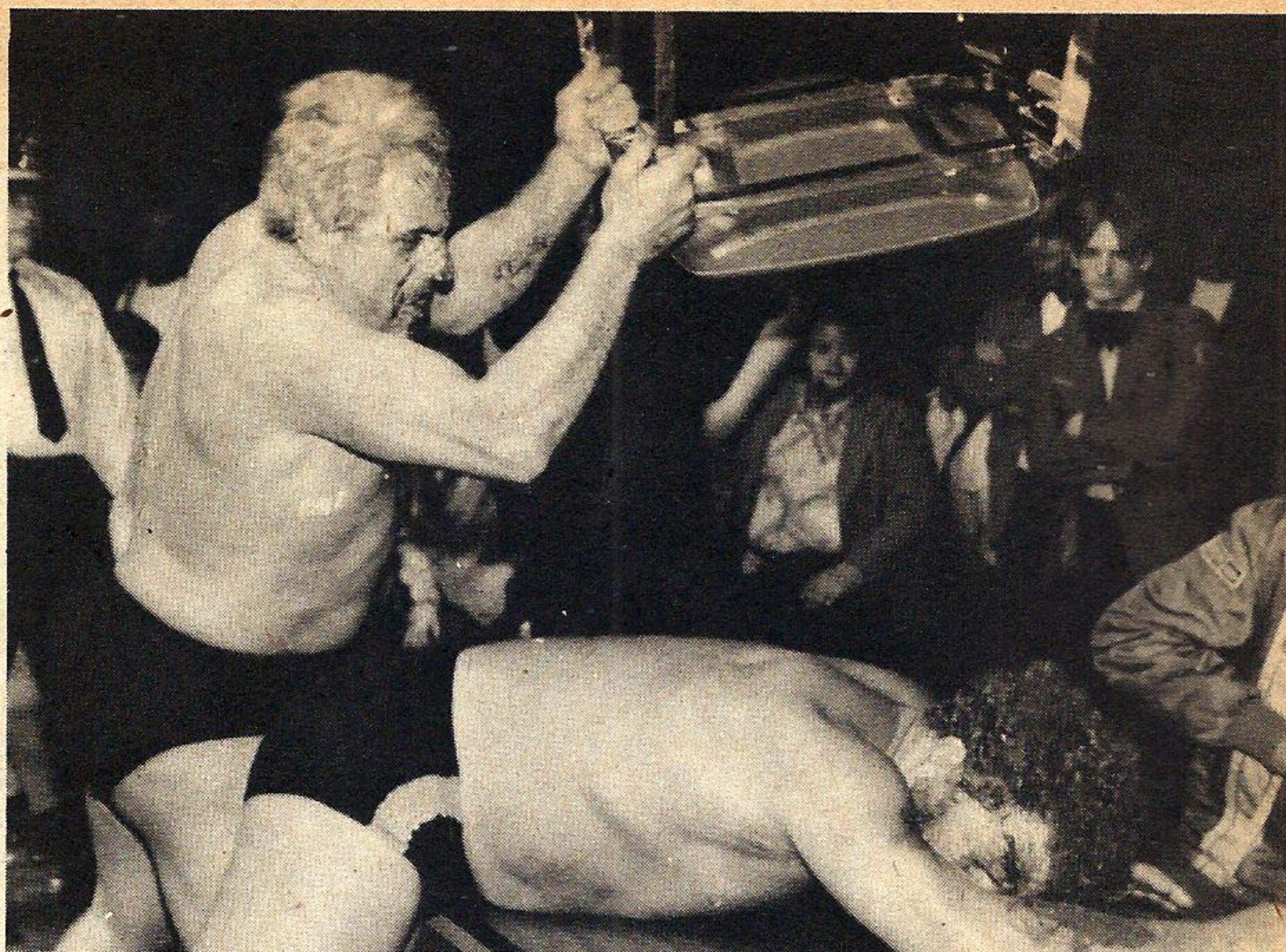
"I want you to listen to this letter I got," Harley whispered hoarsely. "It is from a fan in New York, who admits that he has never seen me wrestle and that his opinion is formulated solely on the basis of magazine articles." Race began to read.

"Harley Race: I have never seen you wrestle, but I've read a lot of stories in the wrestling magazines describing how mean you are.

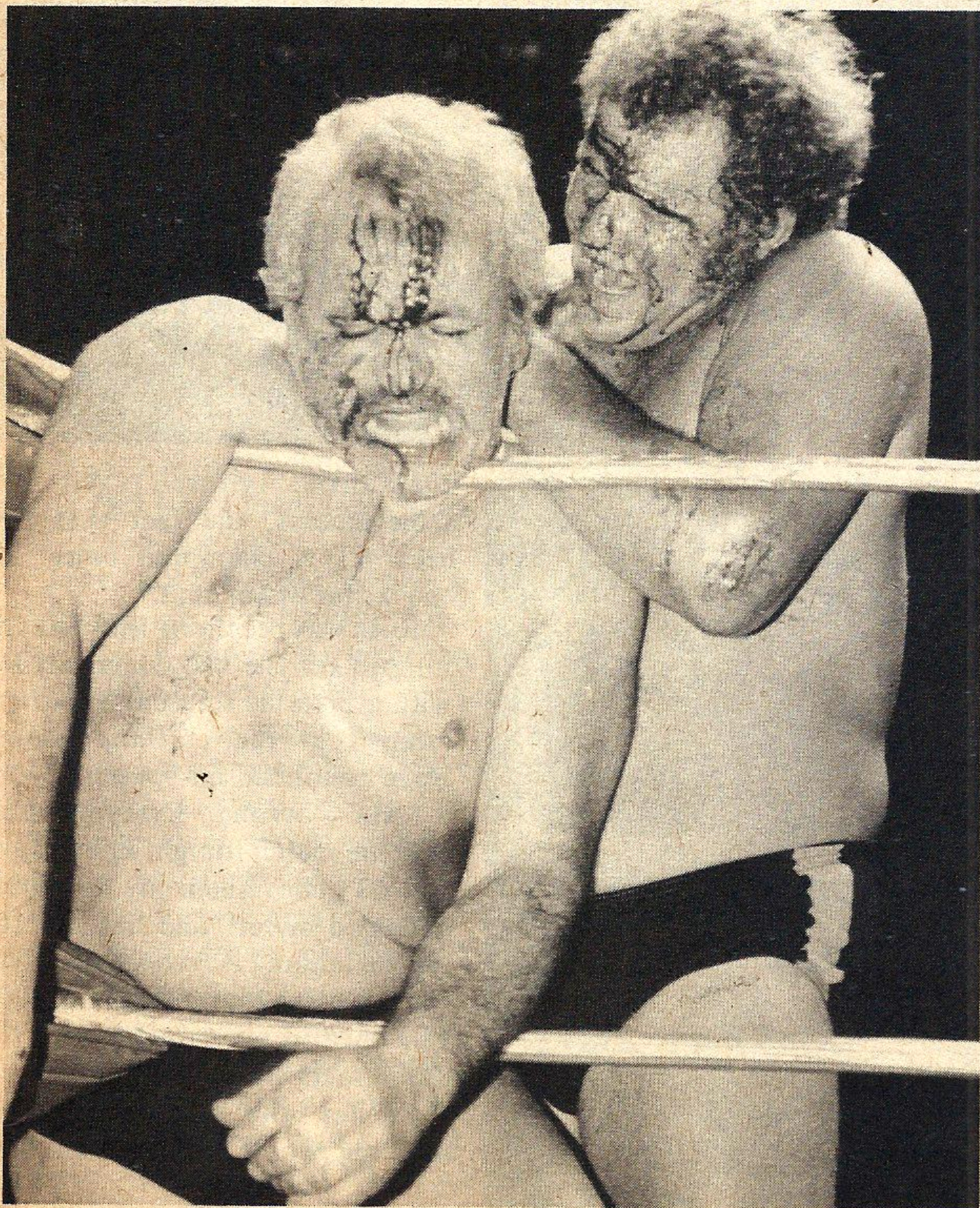
"I think you are an abomination to the sport of wrestling. It is a shame that you are a champion when you are obviously not decent enough to treat other people with respect. I read about how shameful your conduct was when you wrestled Rocky Johnson and I hear that you are as bad as The Sheik and Abdullah the Butcher. Probably worse. If it were up to me I'd have you banned from wrestling and maybe even the country."

Sheik brandishes a chair and is about to break it over Harley's head! Sheik proved he is still wrestling's most vicious man. Even Race is convinced!

THE OFF ACK!"



PHOTOS BY BRAD MCFARLIN



The tables are turned and Harley uses a rope to choke the breath out of the Sheik. According to Race, the tactics he uses are completely scientific especially when you compare them to the tactics of the Arabian madman.

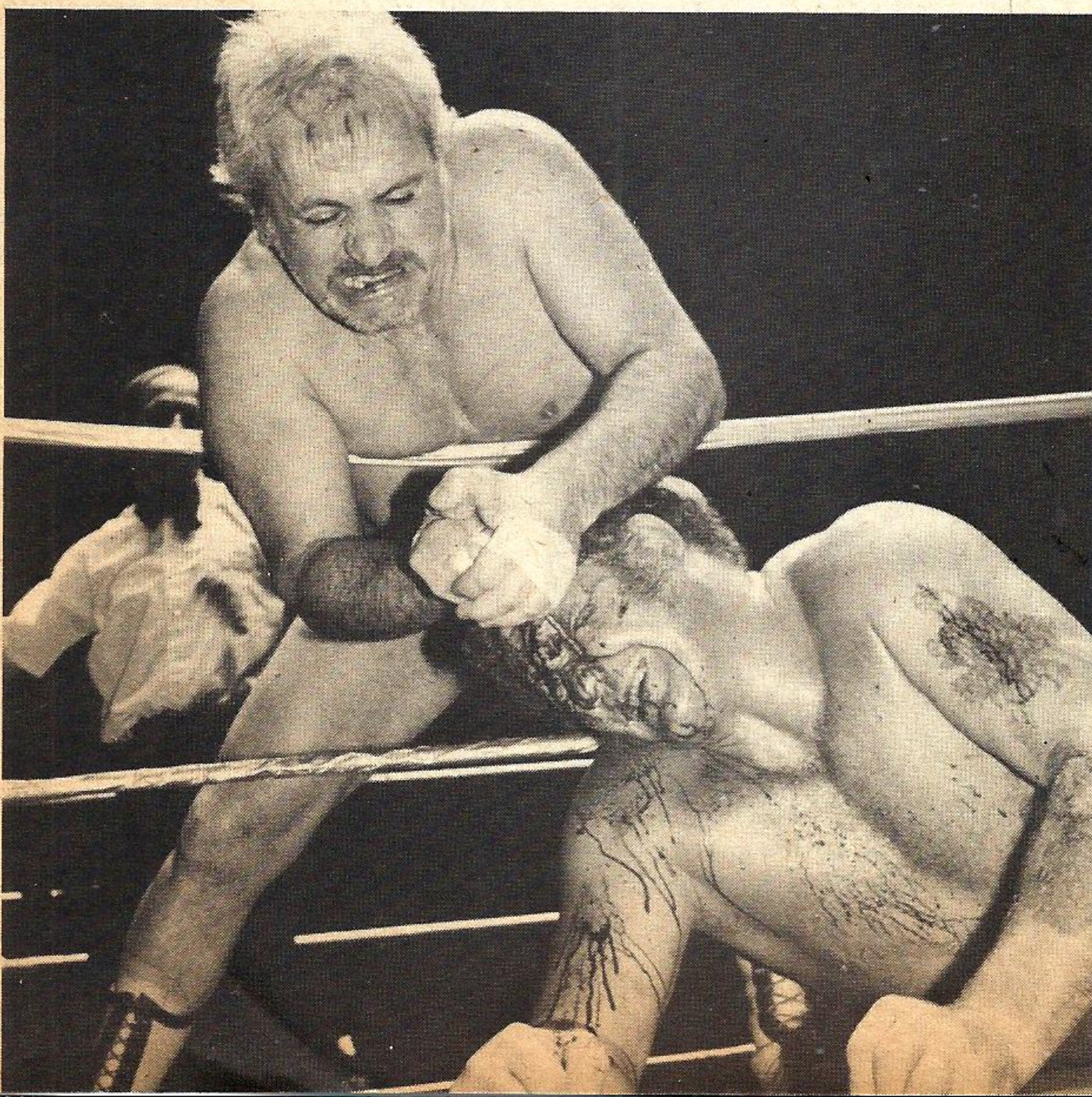
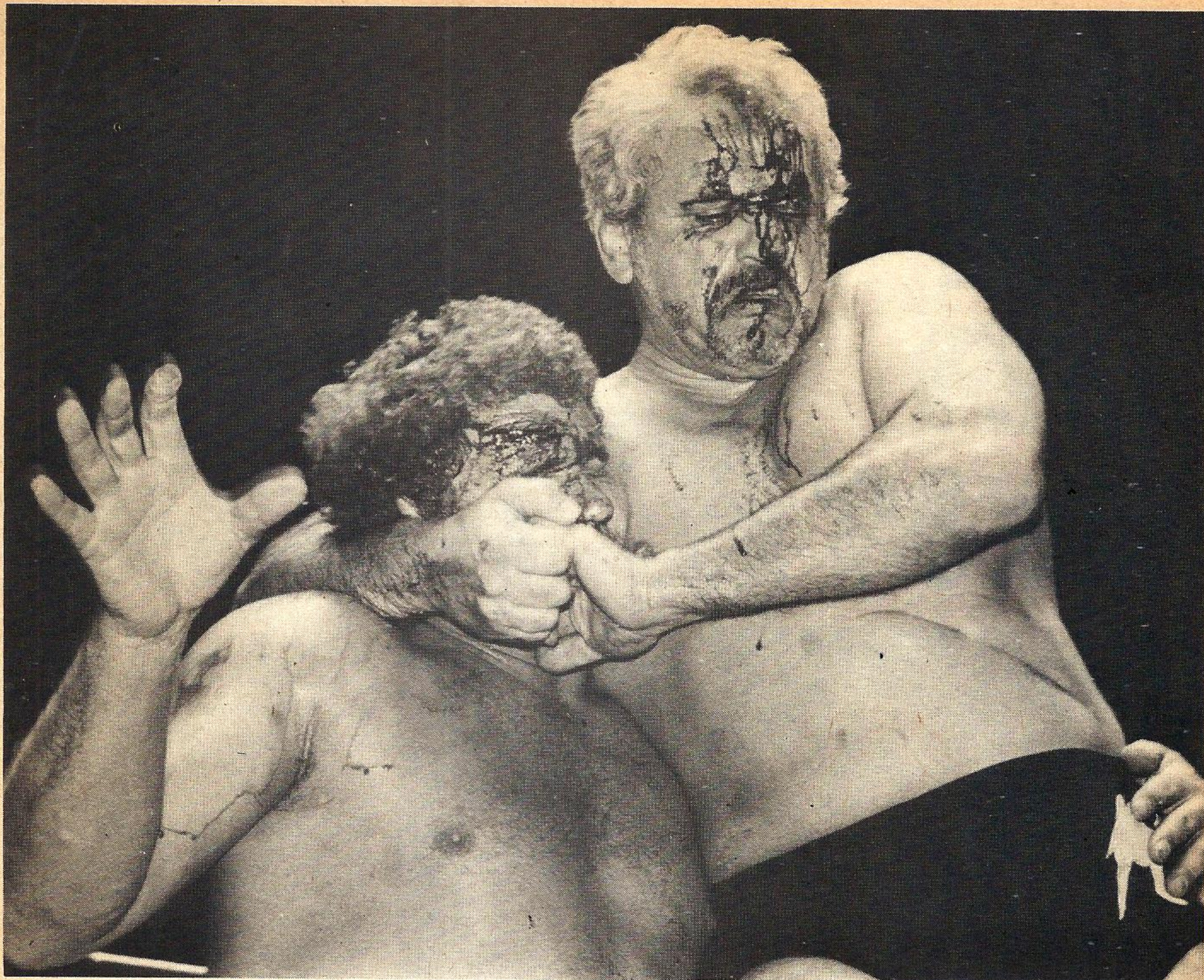
Race paused in the silence which engulfed the room. He slowly, yet forcefully, crumpled the paper and threw it to the ground.

"What the hell is going on here?" he thundered. "I'm worse than The Sheik? How can anyone say that? The magazines that write that crap are guilty of the worst journalistic ineptitude I have ever seen. I am as bad as the Sheik? They don't get their stories right and they misquote me just to portray me as a villain.

"I may not be the nicest guy around, but there are dozens of wrestlers far more disgusting and far less principled than me. How can this stinking magazine get away with this?

"They had someone at this match tonight and they saw how vicious The Sheik was. But you know they're going to write how I provoked The Sheik or how it was a battle between two maniacs.

"When am I going to get the fair treatment I deserve? I've shown real restraint in my matches against opponents who were obviously hurting. I don't try to maim people but that side is never discussed. Any good points I have are constantly ignored by the press. Any good things I do are



constantly ignored. All my achievements, the fact that I've been NWA champion twice, no one writes about that."

Race was breathing heavily as he jumped off the metal chair. It fell with a matallic screech. Reporters jumped at the crashing sound. Race continued his speech.

"Am I wrong? Everyone who saw the match tonight knows how vicious The Sheik is. I merely defended myself, and this isn't the typical alibing wrestlers use. No, I'm not using that. I'm talking fact. For once in my career I want the damn facts straight!

"When the magazines start dividing people into good and bad

Top of page: A headlock makes the bloody Race fall into near unconsciousness. Left: Sheik continues to savage Harley.

Using his feared piledriver, Race is about to crush Sheik to the mat and he hopes it will end the battle.

guy categories they do it just for sensationalism and they don't give a damn about what type of people they're hurting.

"Okay, if I'm a bad guy, does that automatically make me as bad as The Sheik? That's ridiculous! But I've had to suffer through this sort of crap all my career and I'm not taking it anymore!

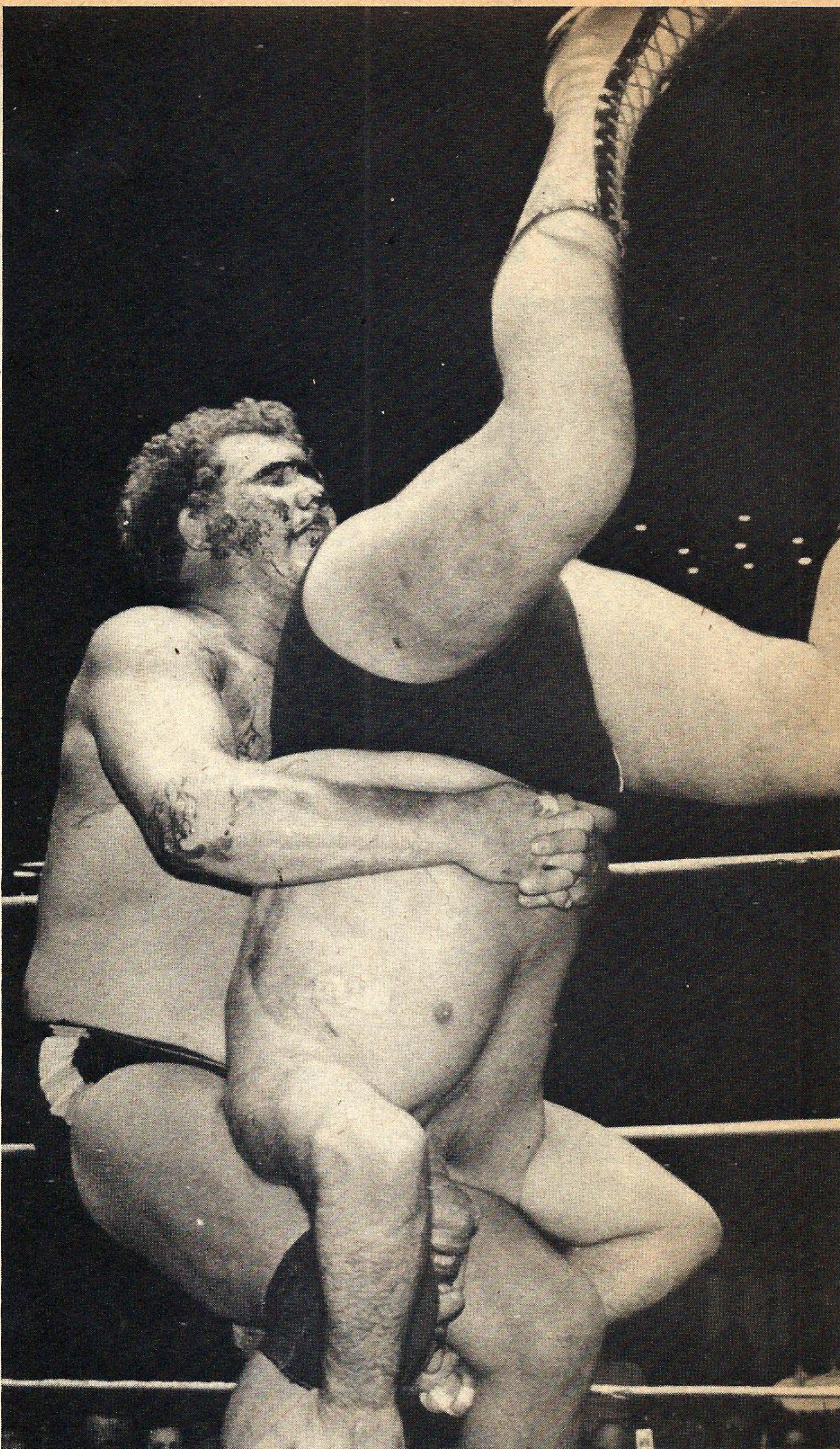
"If I do something awful then I'll be the first to admit it. But don't make me out to be Satan, man, because I'm not. And don't distort facts, because that isn't cool. That's not the way things are done.

"Look at this article in 'The Wrestler,' Harley yelled, his voice dripping with sarcasm, "printed about my title match against Rocky Johnson. The lousy headline, 'Harley Race's Shameful Match Against Rocky Johnson.' Now I was brilliant that night. Everyone who was there admitted that much. But those people who write for the magazines don't like me. This stinking article made it sound like I had used a machine-gun on Johnson.

"That's not fair. And the article misquoted me. I never said that I don't care a whit about what the fans think of me. Maybe I don't play to them as much as other wrestlers, but I know that they are the fiber of the sport.

"I can't wait to see the article on tonight's match against the Sheik. Will it be accurate, guys? Or will it be another edition of the Get Harley Race Club?"

With that, Race turned and left. We decided to print Harley's entire speech, exactly, word for word. We also decided to describe his match against Sheik without fear or favor. Though Harley will never believe it, the account of the match against The Sheik can be summed up in one sentence.



Sheik was disgraceful and Harley was not.

Race displayed a sense of decency and courage, which has been lacking in his career of late. He showed remarkable restraint in dealing with the detestable Sheik. That is admirable. If there was a villain here tonight, it was Sheik.

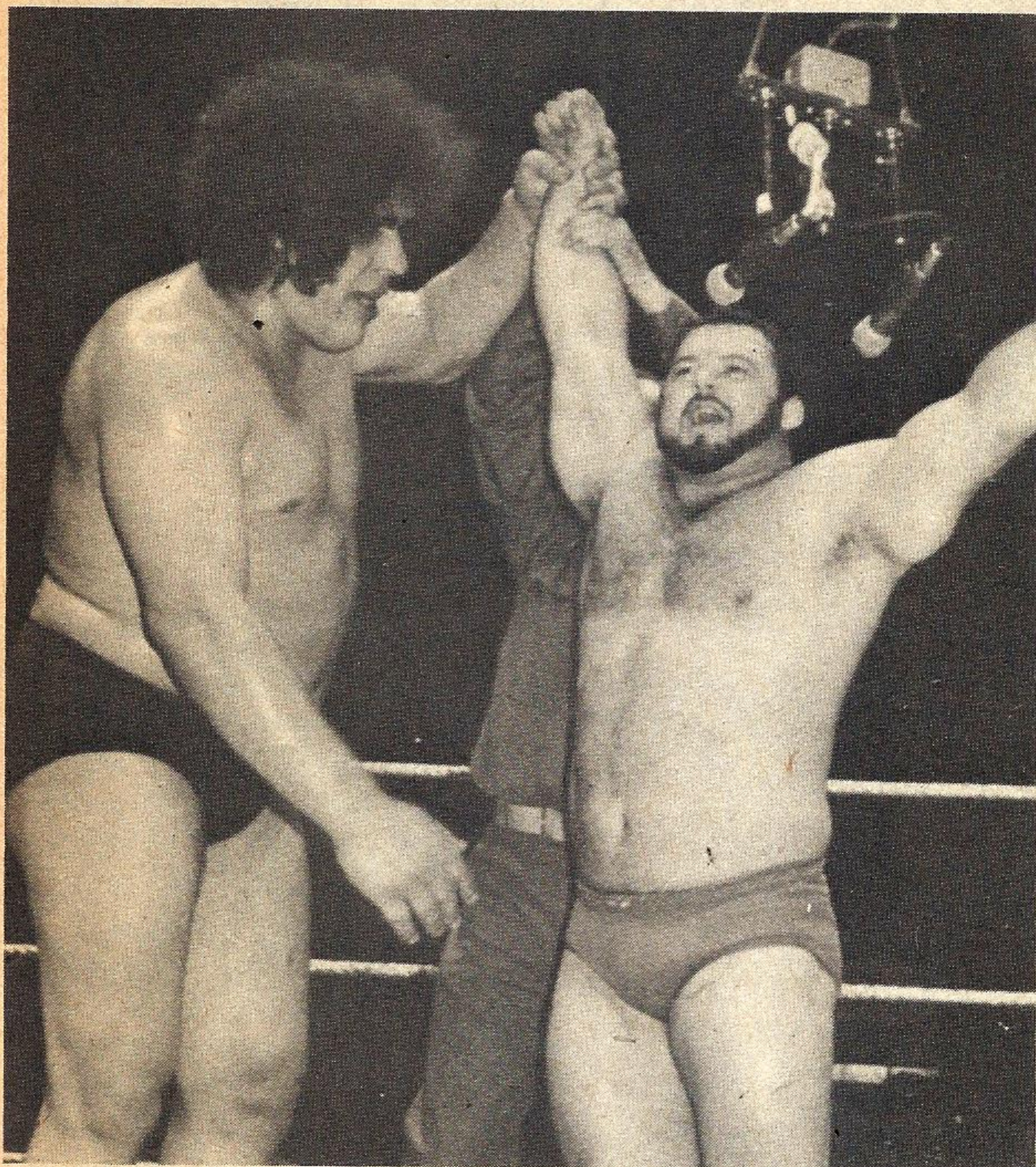
See, Harley. We're willing to accept dissenting opinions. If we're

wrong we'll be the first to admit it. We would never lie or say a wrestler has said something he didn't.

We will continue to print what happens in wrestling. We will never be intimidated. If you are cruel, Harley, we will print it. If you are decent we will print that also.

That, Mr. Race, is wrestling journalism. □

Andre the Giant & Ivan Putski:



A photo taken several years ago when Ivan and Andre first became a tag team. It has been over one year since they last put their team efforts together.

EVERY ONCE AND a while, wrestling gives the fans what is the dream tag team. Two years ago, a truly formidable, undoubtedly unbeatable combination was created. Andre the Giant and Ivan Putski. They were utterly amazing, wreaking retribution from the skulls of rulebreakers across the nation.

Fans flocked to see this exciting duo. A title was within reach. And then, the partnership dissolved. Not because of any ill feelings between the two men. Simply, Andre had too many individual commitments, appearances which kept intruding on the efficiency of the team.

Ah, but they were brilliant. The wrestling community waited anxiously for them to reunite, to relentlessly make their way toward a federation title.

SOMEONE MUST BEAT BEFORE THEY DESTROY

PHOTOS BY BILL APTER

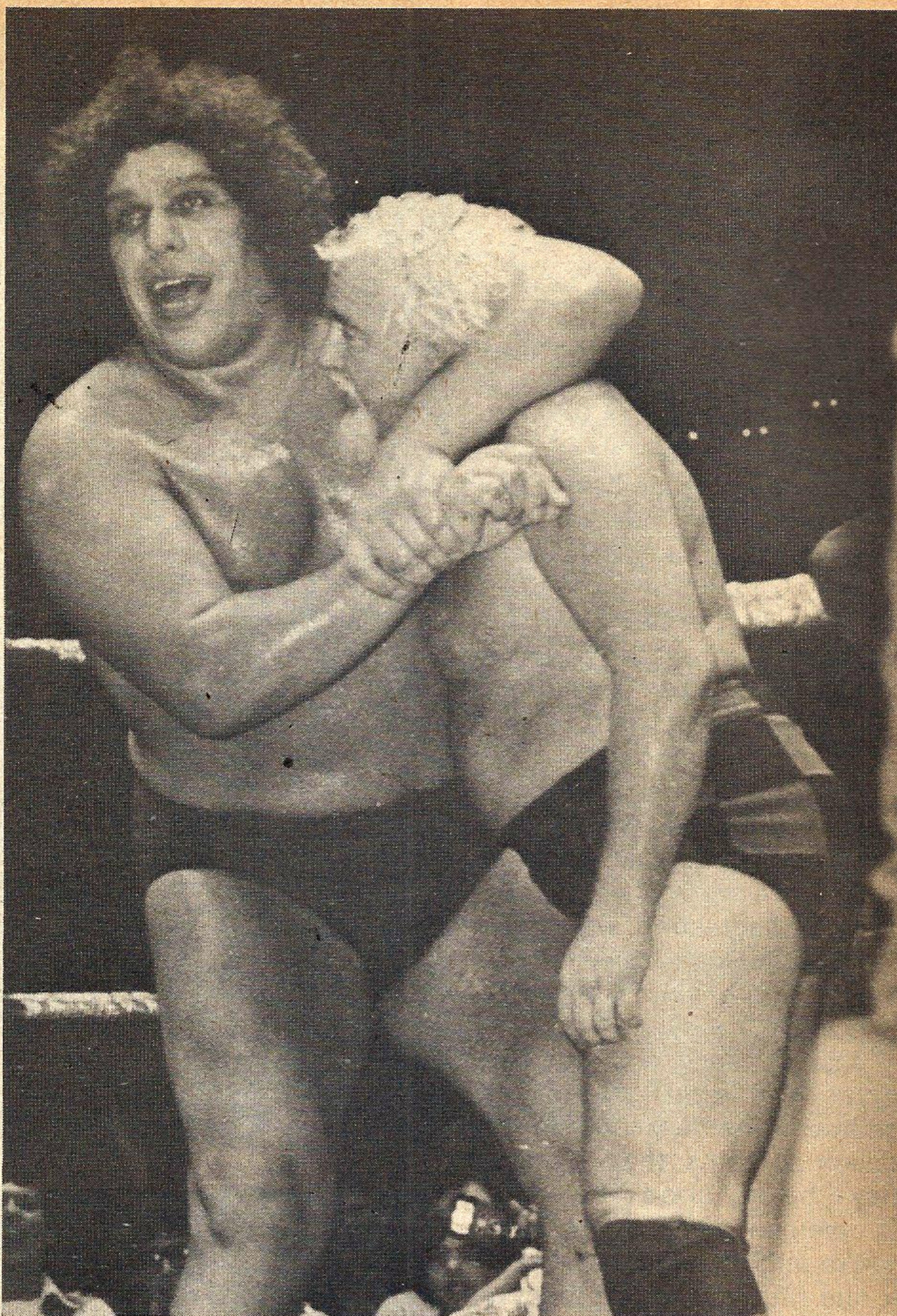
Their first match as a team rocked wrestling to its very roots. Now, Andre the Giant and Ivan Putski once again have formed a tag team. If the pair continue, it is sure to ruin them. Read the shocking reasons for this extraordinary turn of events!

Then, they signed to team together again. The wrestling world was ecstatic. Surely, this signaled a glorious title reign. Surely, they would never lose. Surely, they would show supreme invincibility.

Surely? Interesting how things which seem so well-planned and so perfectly calculated have a way of getting detoured. Such is the tale of Andre the Giant and Ivan Putski.

Illustrative of this startling failure was a tag team match against the Graham brothers, Billy and Luke. Now, there should have been no reason for Andre and Ivan to encounter much difficulty in this bout. They were the superior talents. Their partnership of two years ago indicated their brilliant combinations. It would be a short match, replete with some old-fashioned Graham rule-breaking, some incoherency from Crazy Luke, some chivalry by Andre and Ivan.

Guess again. The team of Putski and Andre sputtered pitifully, the primary case being Putski's continuing inability to work with Andre and fend off the Grahams. In fact, Putski became so battered that Andre had to help him back to the dressing room and enlist the aid



Andre snares "Crazy" Luke Graham in a headlock during the heat of battle. Ivan was badly injured in this bout. Dusty Rhodes replaced him.

EAT THEM AND DESTROY THEMSELVES!

of Dusty Rhodes to finish off the Grahams.

"The rhythm was not there," a disconsolate Putski said. "When we first got together, we could feel a real good blending of our talents. Tonight, I just

didn't feel right. I wasn't able to tag Andre to help me. It didn't feel that good. We aren't ready."

Perhaps an adequate lack of preparation was the principal reason for the team's troubles.

"We did not get in enough

practice," Andre said. "We were not smooth out there. No matter how much natural talent you may have, when you get two men together, you need to polish the teamwork. It wasn't there tonight."

A tag team in wrestling is truly one of the most intriguing things to watch. When you get two men whose talents so perfectly mesh together, a tag team may be the most thrilling combination in sports. Thus, when you match the towering size of Andre the Giant with the compacted strength of Ivan Putski, it should be devastating. Assuming they can work together.

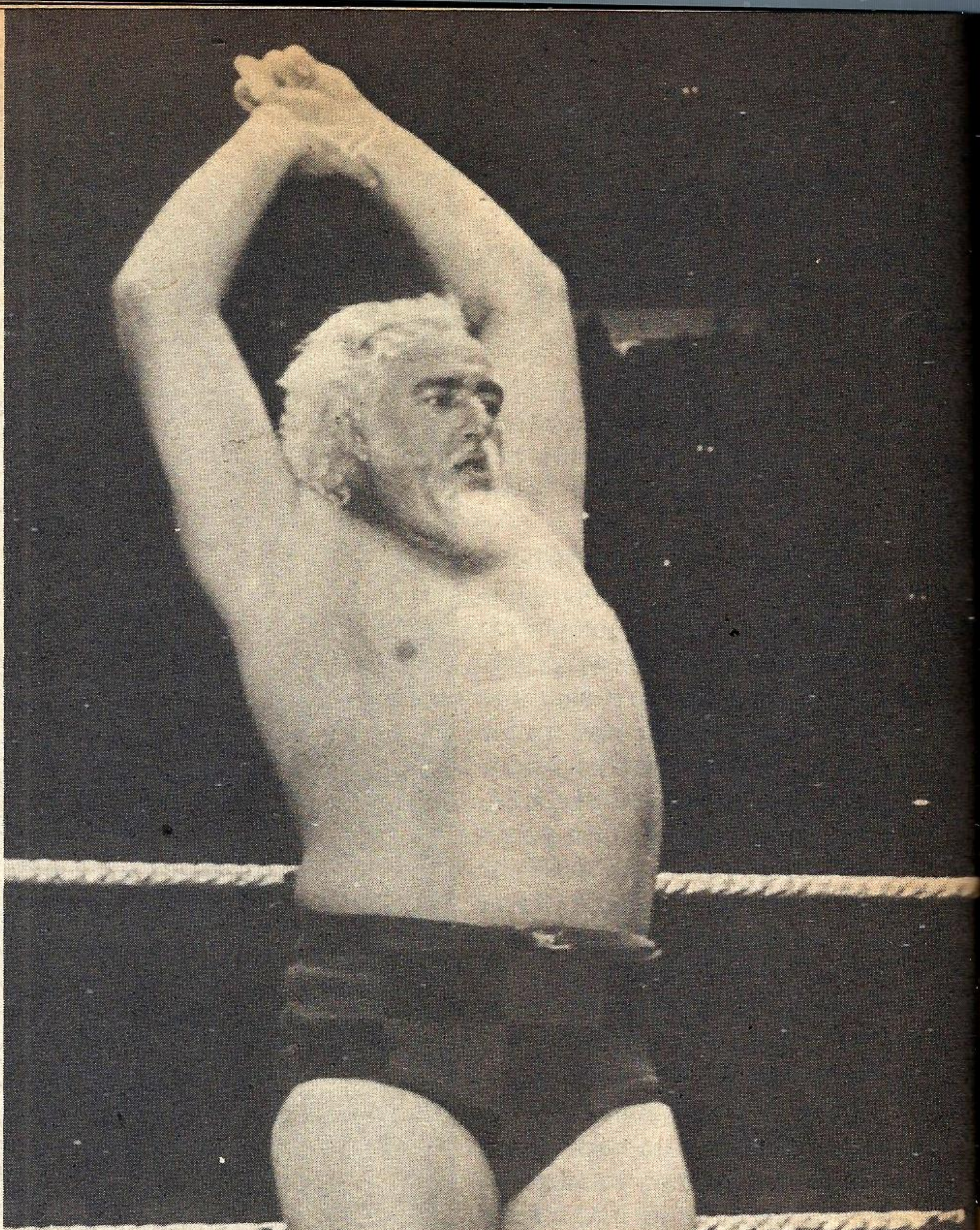
"It was just an off-night," Putski said. "Once we get in a little more practice, we'll be better."

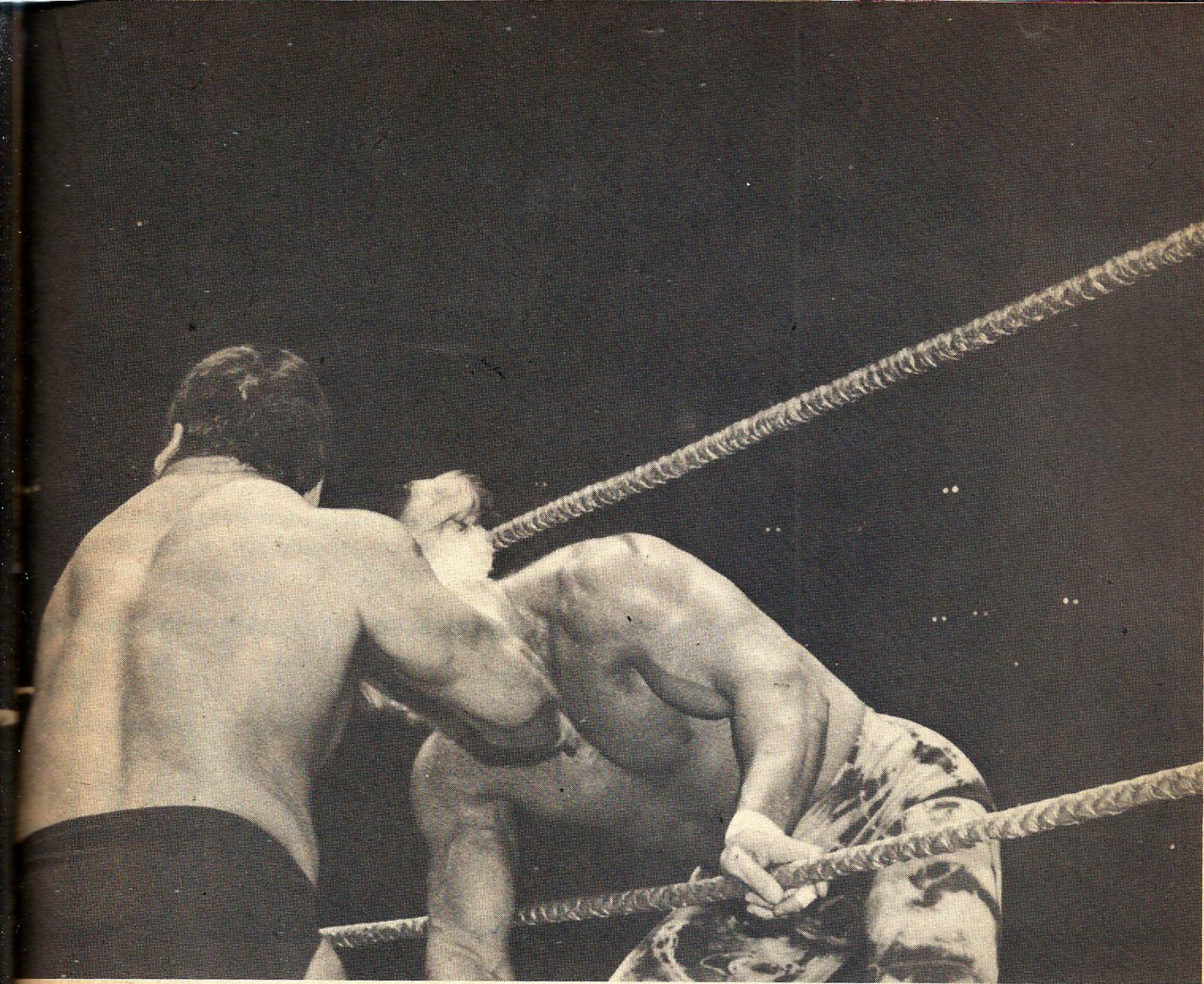
Yet a disquieting word was heard from Superstar Graham, not usually given to quotable comments:

"Just because you got two guys with their skills, as mediocre as they are, is no reason to think that together they'll be any good. They don't complement each other, man. You're putting two mush-heads in one ring and telling them to win when they ain't ready. And those two guys ain't got enough upstairs to make it together."

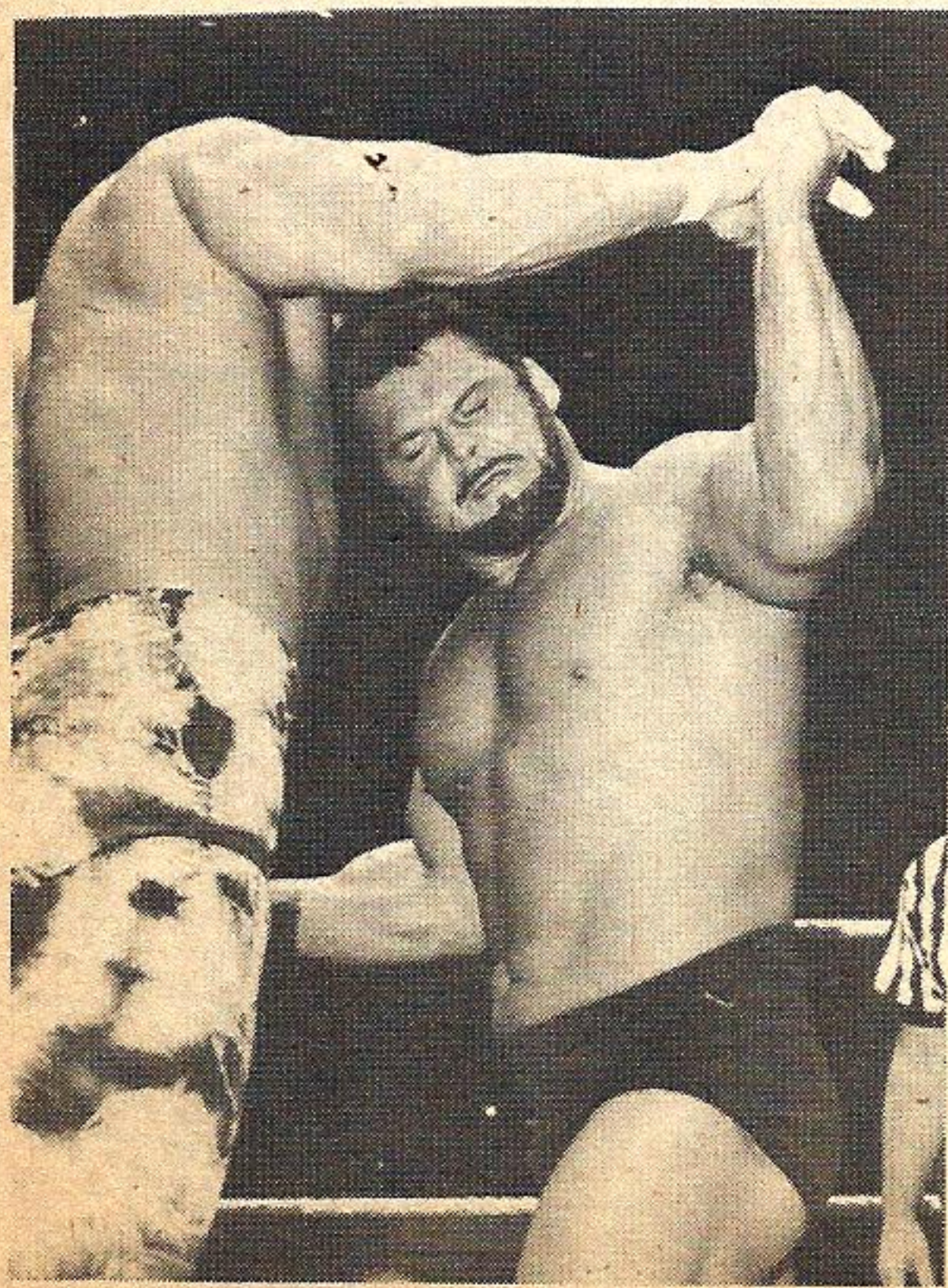
Almost quotable. But Graham does seize upon one essential element.

It is entirely possible that Putski and Andre are too stubborn to work effectively as a tag team. It is quite possible that these two men, while on paper are effective, in person just don't make it. Perhaps they are too set in their ways, too unwilling to minimize certain aspects of their game for the good of the team. A possibility which both reject, with considerable vehemence.





Above: Ivan concentrates on Superstar while Luke prepares to batter the "Super Pole." Left: The Giant is about to whip Luke across the ring. Below: Ivan tests the strength of Superstar.



"Just because we have one bad night, everyone wants to jump on us and say we are a bad team," Putski said irritably. "Are we not allowed to have one bad night? If this happened to anyone else, it would have been understood that not enough practice had been done and that the timing was off."

"But when it is Andre the Giant and Ivan Putski, we are not given any leeway. That is wrong, you know?"

This might be the very root of the problem. Because of Andre's unbeaten record and Putski's continued brilliance, too much is demanded of them. They are placed on a level of expectation not accorded any other team. People expect them to pulverize an opponent, to be

immune to any mistakes, to even the semblance of difficulty.

After all, they are only human.

"We will get our team working well and then we will be triumphant time and again," Andre said insistently. "There is no doubt about that."

But what if the team just won't work? What if Andre and Ivan push themselves, demand that they blend dissimilar pieces into one jagged piece? What if this classic example of a tag team becomes a classic example of two athletic geniuses unable to work together?

Have Ivan Putski and Andre the Giant stepped on the road of stubbornness, with only disaster awaiting them? □

PHOTOS BY BILL APTER

Patera vs.

WHY THIS MATCH was considered necessary is an unanswered question which rapidly evolves into a mockery of the title structure in wrestling. Such matches are always reserved for grapplers who have yet to prove they are worthy of contending for the belt.

Rookies, veterans attempting comebacks, wrestlers of dubious value, should be required to wrestle the top contenders

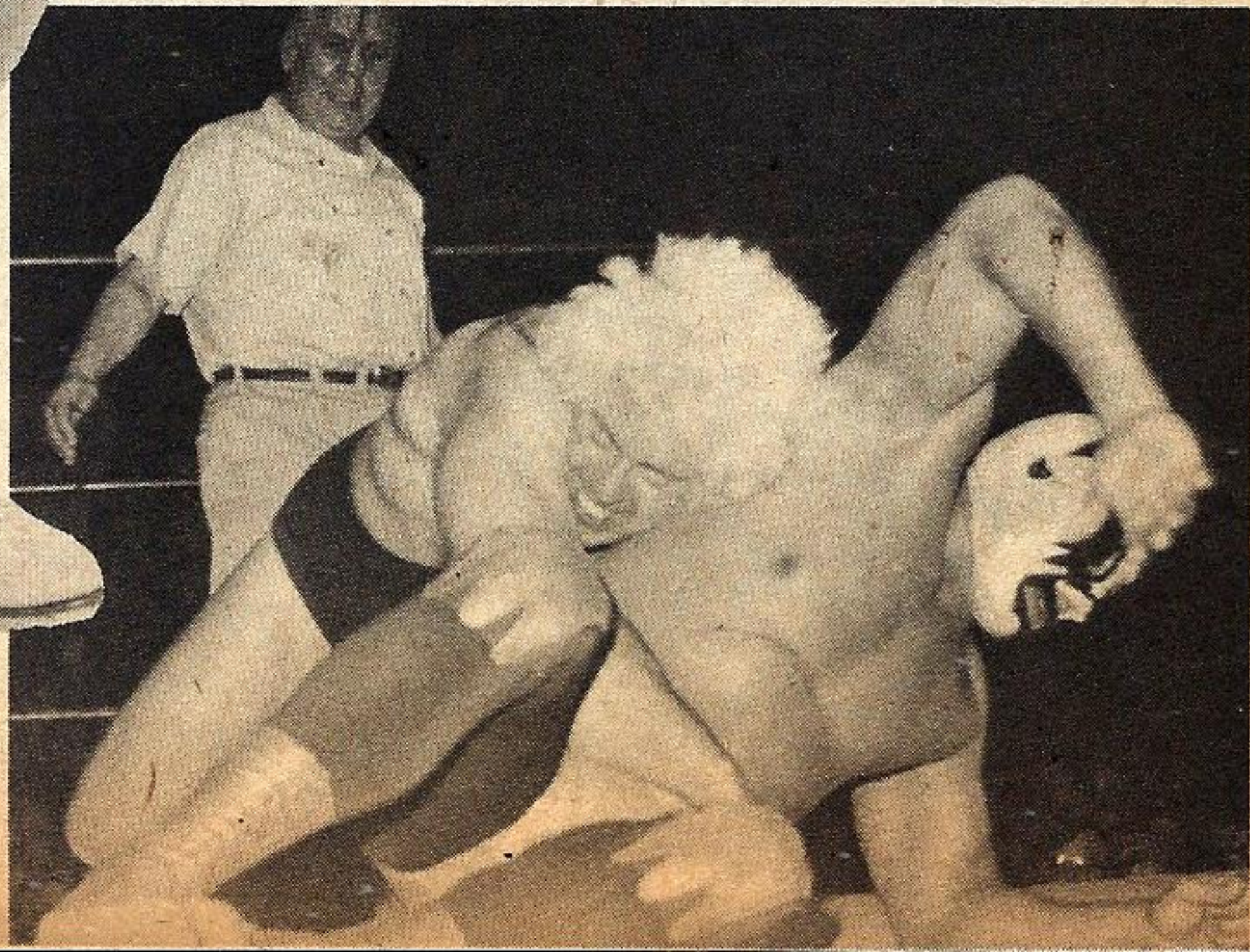
THE MATCH COST THE WWF CHAMP

before even contemplating battling the champ. That is the way championships are supposed to be regulated and it is a fine idea—in theory.

Mil Mascaras and Ken Patera have shown they are suitable title contenders. Their careers are a legacy of triumph. Their skills have been established repeatedly.

Yet Mascaras and Patera were

Mil Mascaras is about to escape from the clutches of Ken Patera (right).



Mascaras

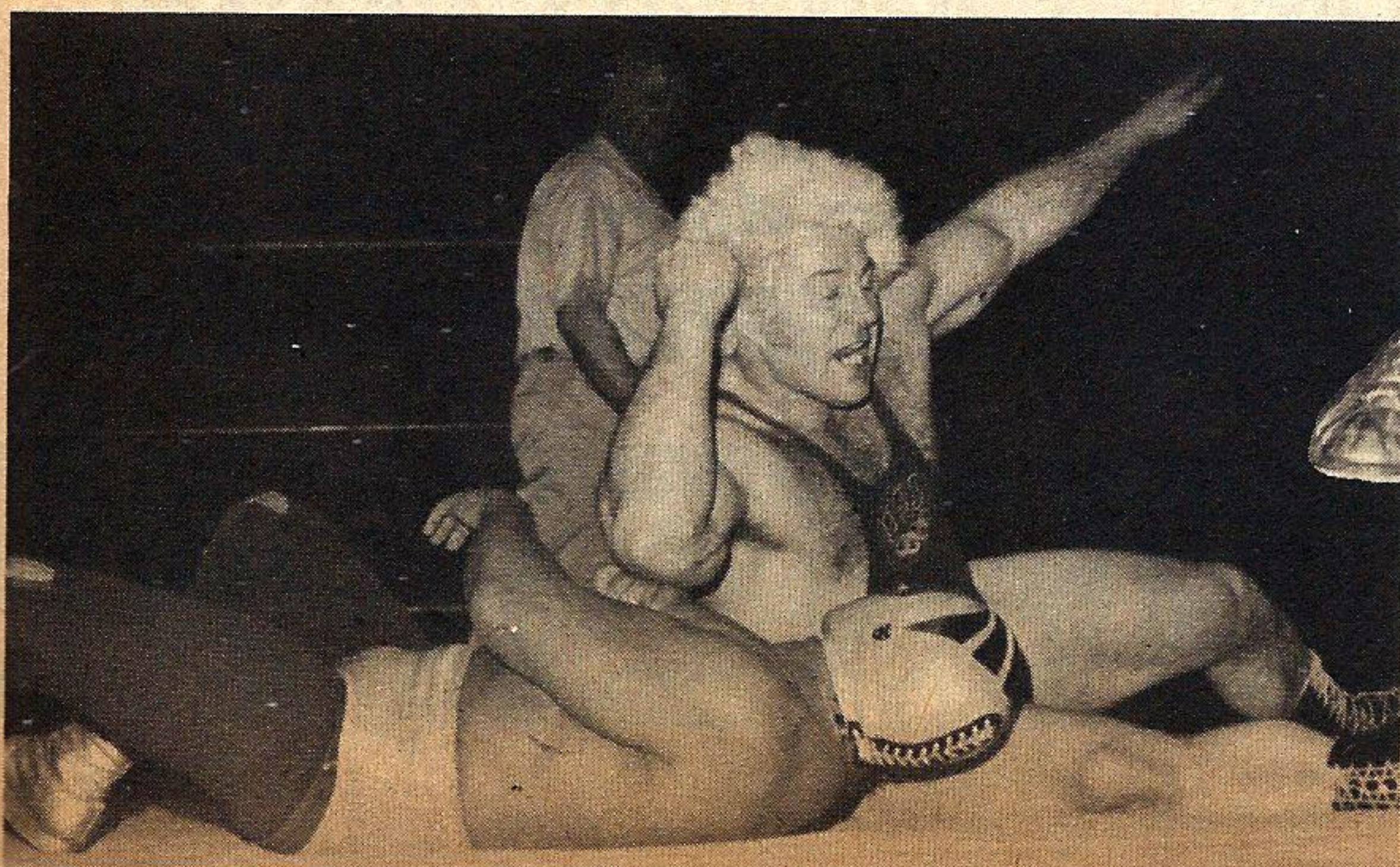
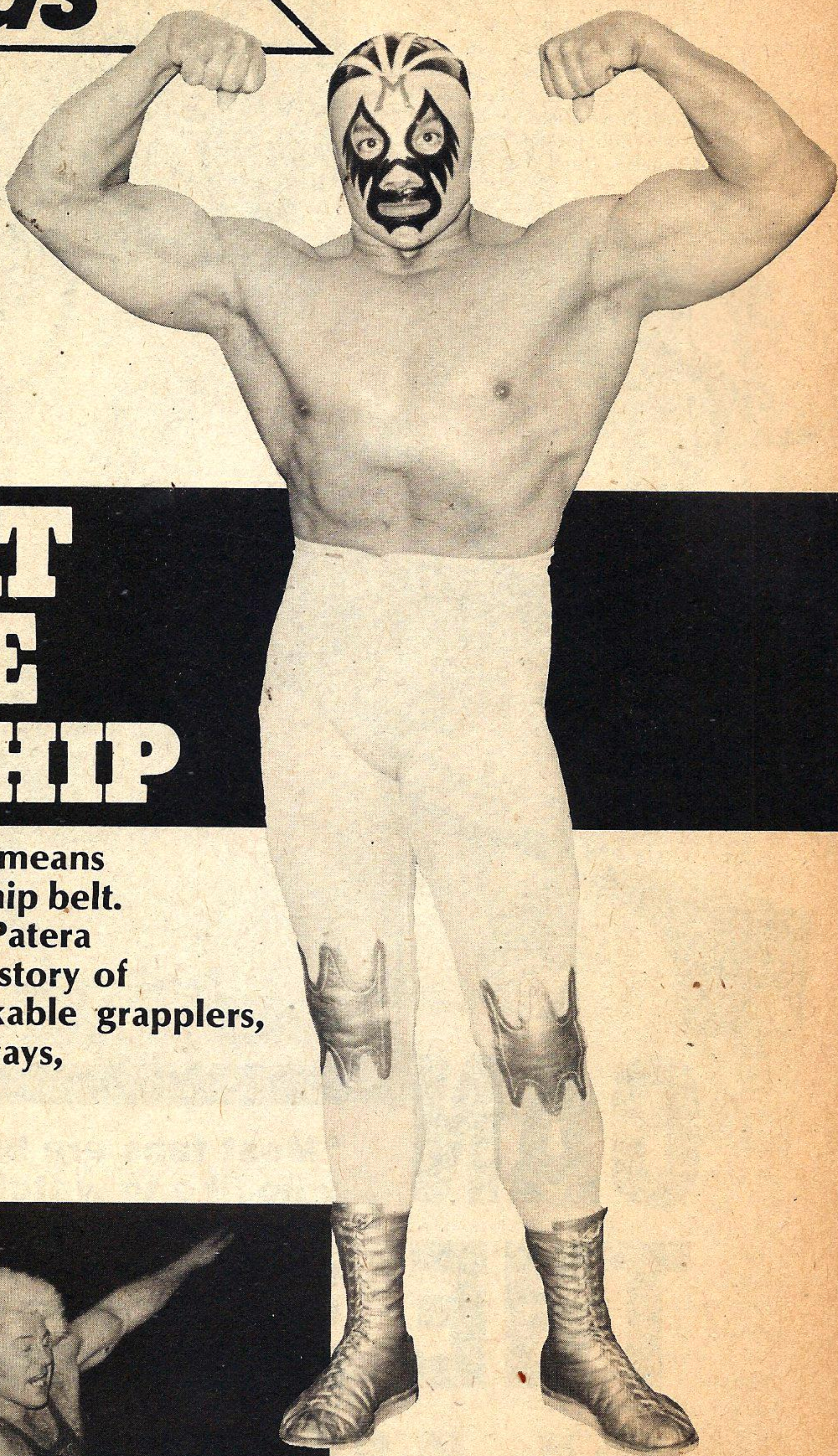
recently involved in a travesty which was to establish who would be Bob Backlund's next opponent for the WWWF belt. These are not rookies or mediocre veterans. These are two superstars. And the cruelest irony of all is that by their confrontations, they both have ruined their chances for a title match in the immediate future.

"I was very indignant when I

(Continued on page 56)

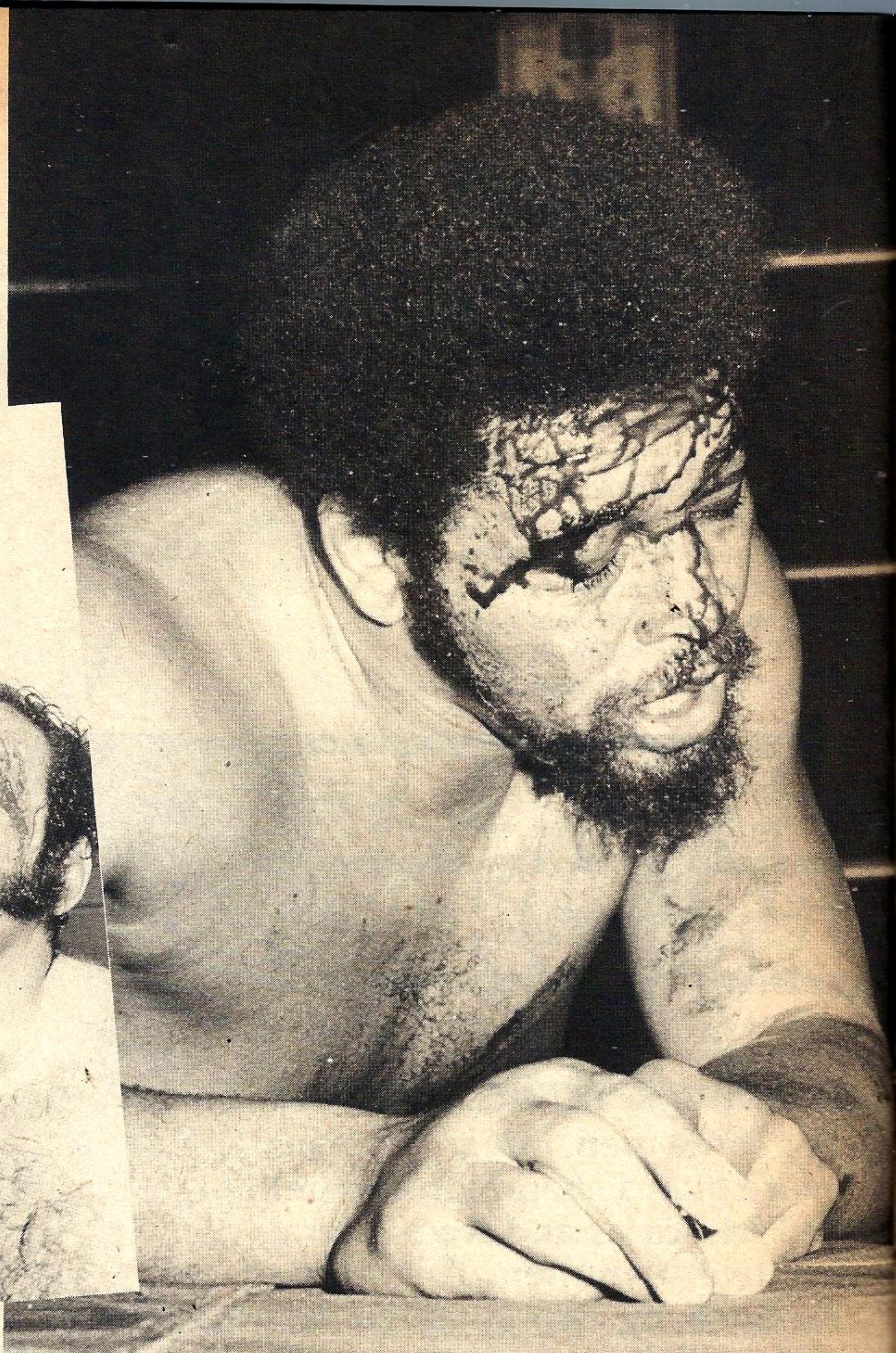
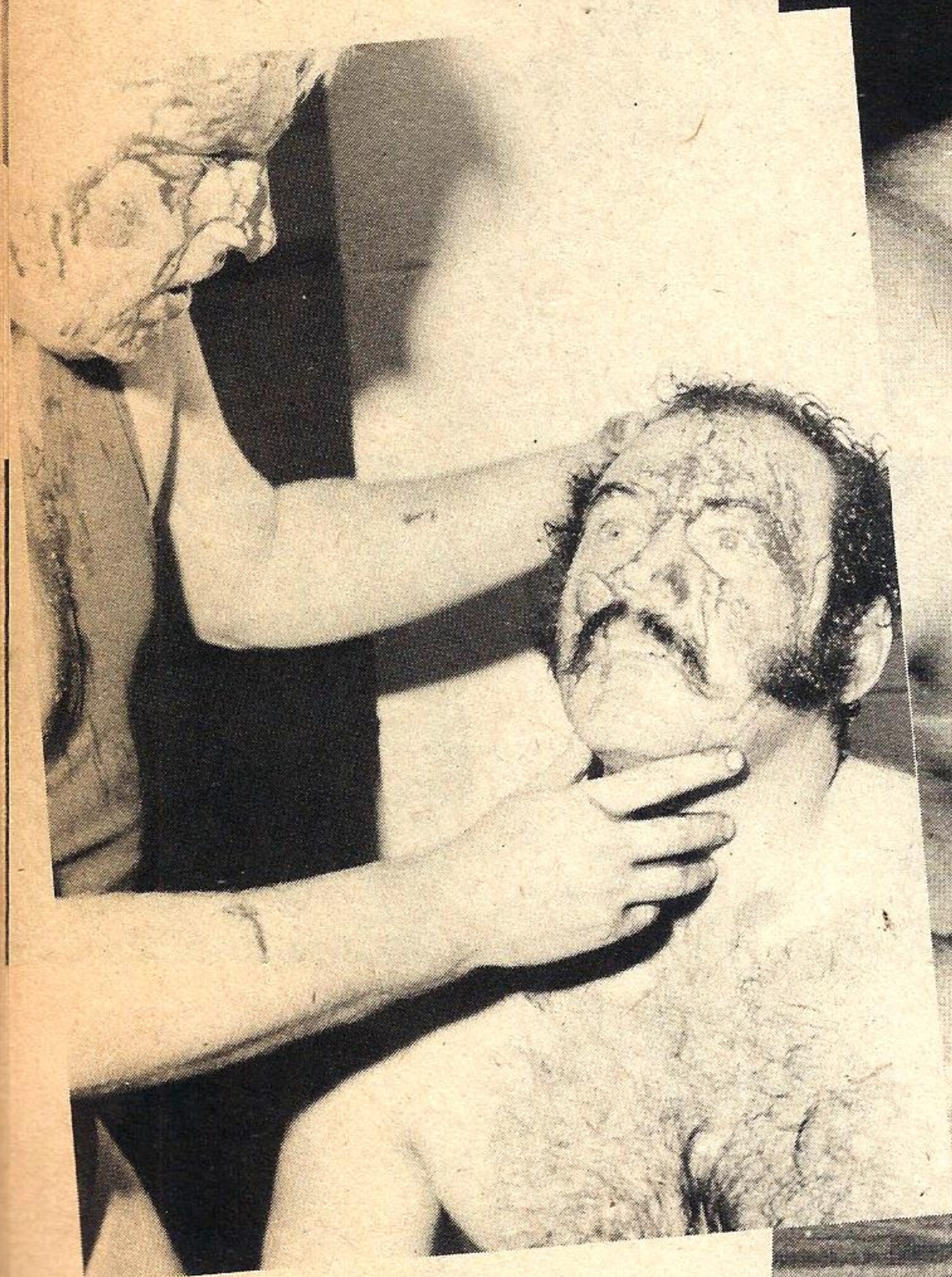
CH THAT EM THE AMPIONSHIP

For some men, integrity means more than a championship belt. Mil Mascaras and Ken Patera are two such men. This story of sacrifice by two remarkable grapplers, different in so many ways, shows why wrestling is the greatest sport of all



Ken Patera uses a flying elbowsmash in order to thwart Mil's attack (left).

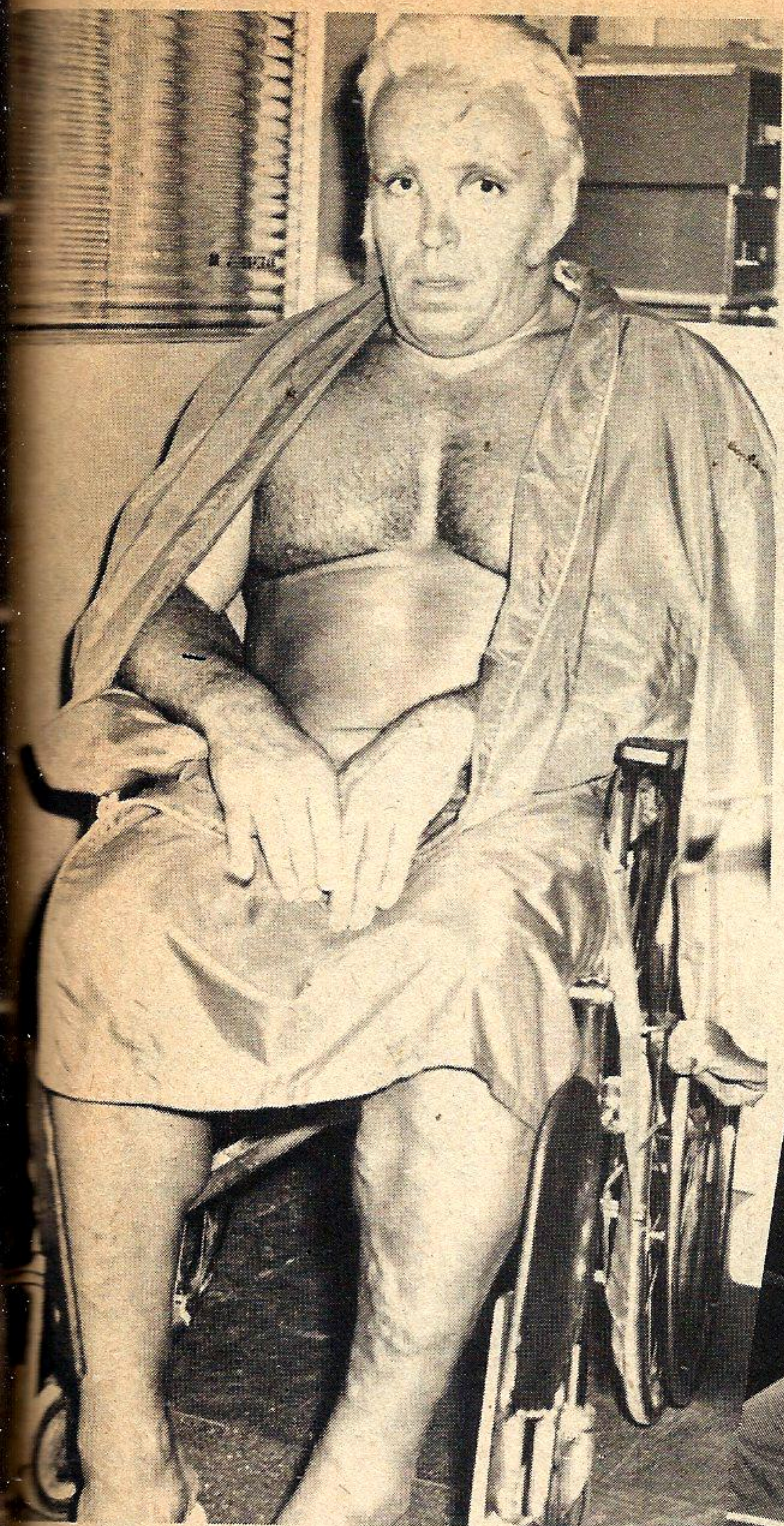
Ernie Ladd, his head bloodied, regains consciousness (right) after being knocked out. Ernie blames the excessive violence of today's matches on promoters and "bloodthirsty fans who like to watch wrestlers get battered." Below: Bobby Heenan examines damage to Blackjack Lanza's eye.



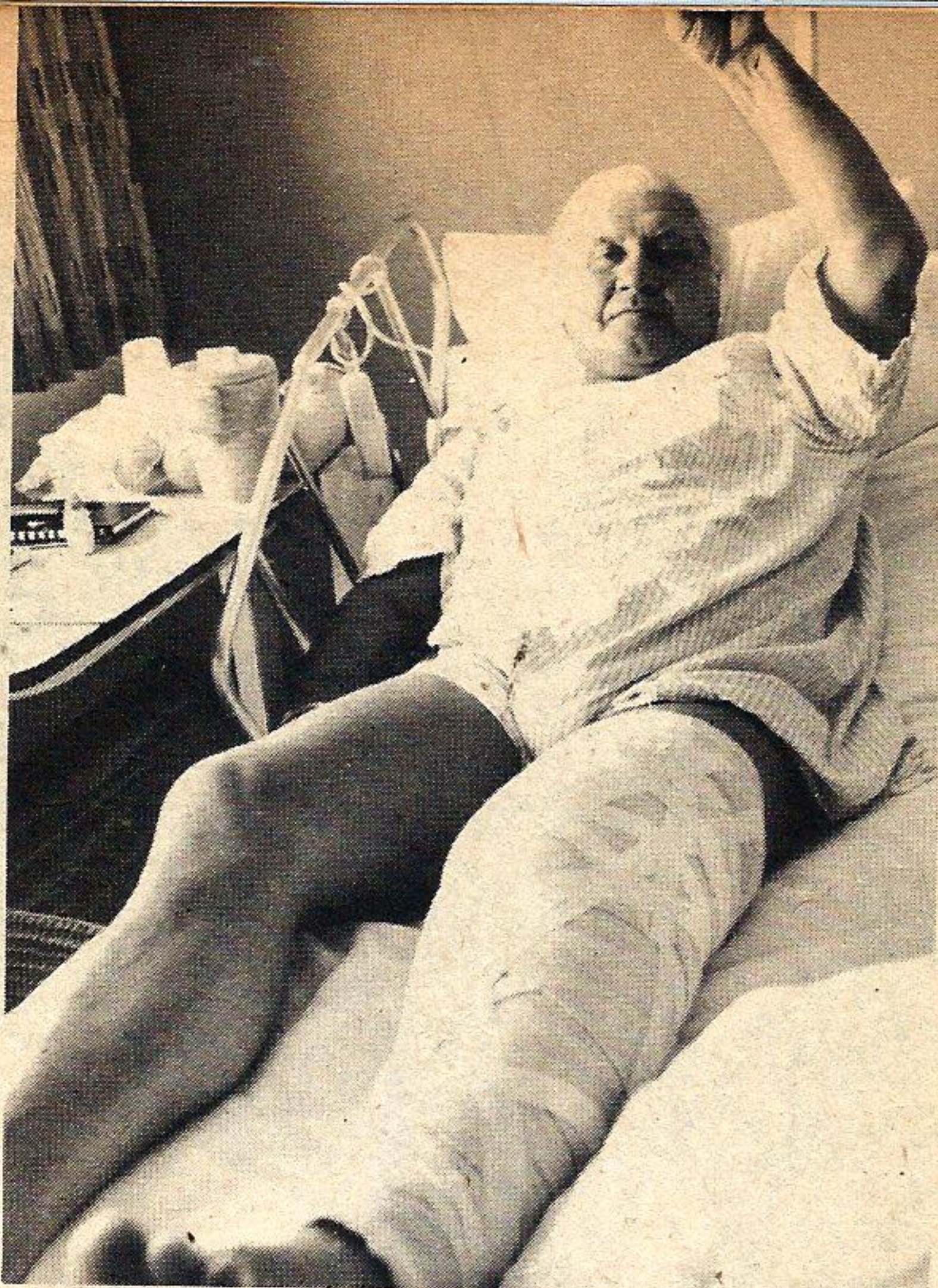
**CAN
THE**

"Most fans are bloodthirsty animals who like to watch wrestlers get battered...When they know they're going to see a bloody match—they break the doors down"—Ernie Ladd

SLAUGHTER BE



Tarzan Tyler sits in a hospital wheelchair, the result of being almost totally disabled in a match. Jean Ferre's piledriver is what hospitalized Tarzan.



Freddie Blassie lies in a hospital bed with his left leg in a cast (left). Freddie has been hospitalized numerous times. Security guards lift unconscious Bill Miller onto a stretcher. Bill was almost murdered by Ray Stevens in a match (below) in San Francisco.



TODAY'S WRESTLERS ARE being slaughtered.

Many, it is true, bring it on themselves through their own violent actions. Others are the unfortunate victims of crazed, bloodthirsty grapplers who'd rather draw blood from an opponent than win a match from him.

And despite the dangers involved, despite the rise in injuries, despite the clamor being raised against excess violence, the slaughter, instead of diminishing, continues to grow like a cancer.

"I travel thousands of miles every year searching for talent," said Lou Albano. "I see hundreds and hun-

dreds of matches in every part of the United States and Canada and I've been around for awhile. But never have I seen anything like what's going on right now. For as long as I can remember, this sport has never had the bloody wars and the number of serious injuries it has now."

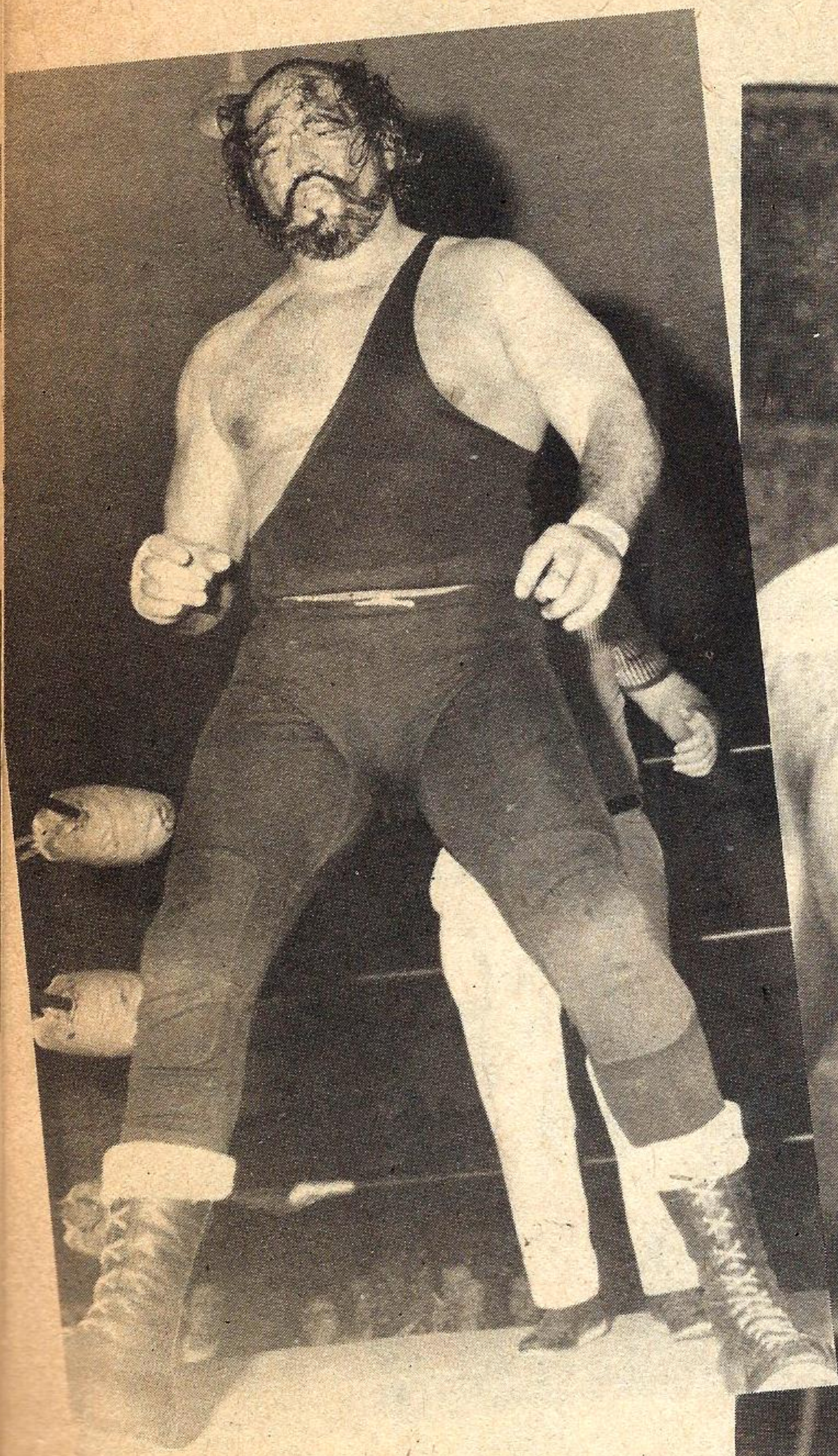
Who is to blame for the slaughter?

"The fans and the promoters are to blame," insists Ernie Ladd, who has done his share of slaughtering. "Fans keep asking for wilder and more dangerous matches. They demand it. And the promoters give it to them."

STOPPED ?

Continued
41

Lionel Robert (right) shows the effects of the butchery of the Castillo brothers. Ciclon Negro (below) lives by what he calls "the law of the jungle."



"I know you get a few letters from people saying wrestling is too brutal, but they're only the minority. Most of the fans are bloodthirsty animals who like to watch wrestlers get battered. They're modern day version of the people who used to watch the Roman gladiators fight to the death. They're the same kind of people who cheered the lions when they ripped apart the Christians.

"Think I'm wrong? Check it out. Wrestling is experiencing a boom in popularity. That boom exactly parallels the increase in violence. The more blood—the more people show up. When they know they're going

to see a chain match or some other kind of bloody match—they break the doors down."

"I don't believe that," Jerry Brisco declared. "The slaughter isn't being caused by fans or promoters. That's just an alibi because it's being caused by wrestlers like Ernie Ladd—people who'll do anything to make names for themselves.

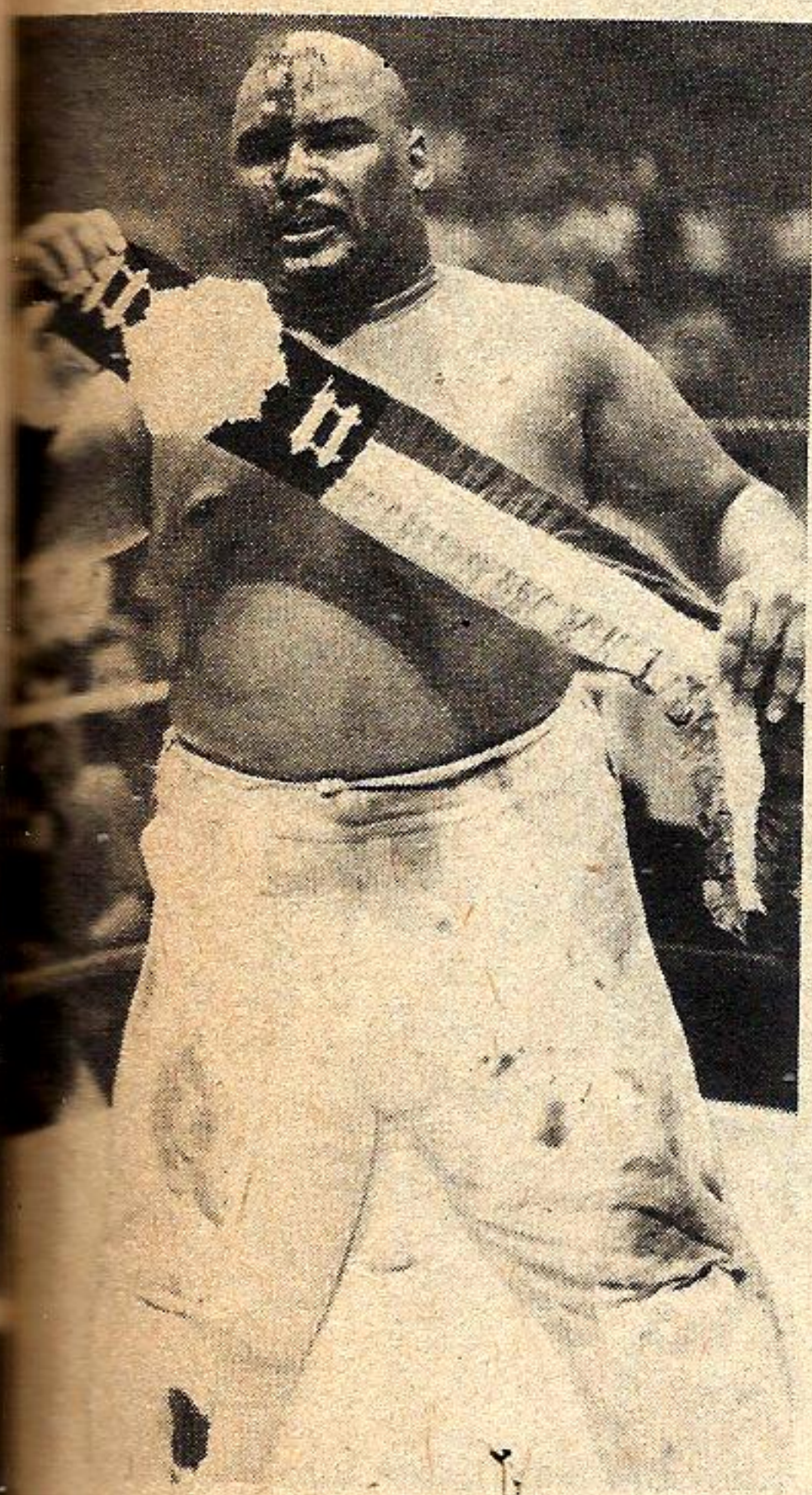
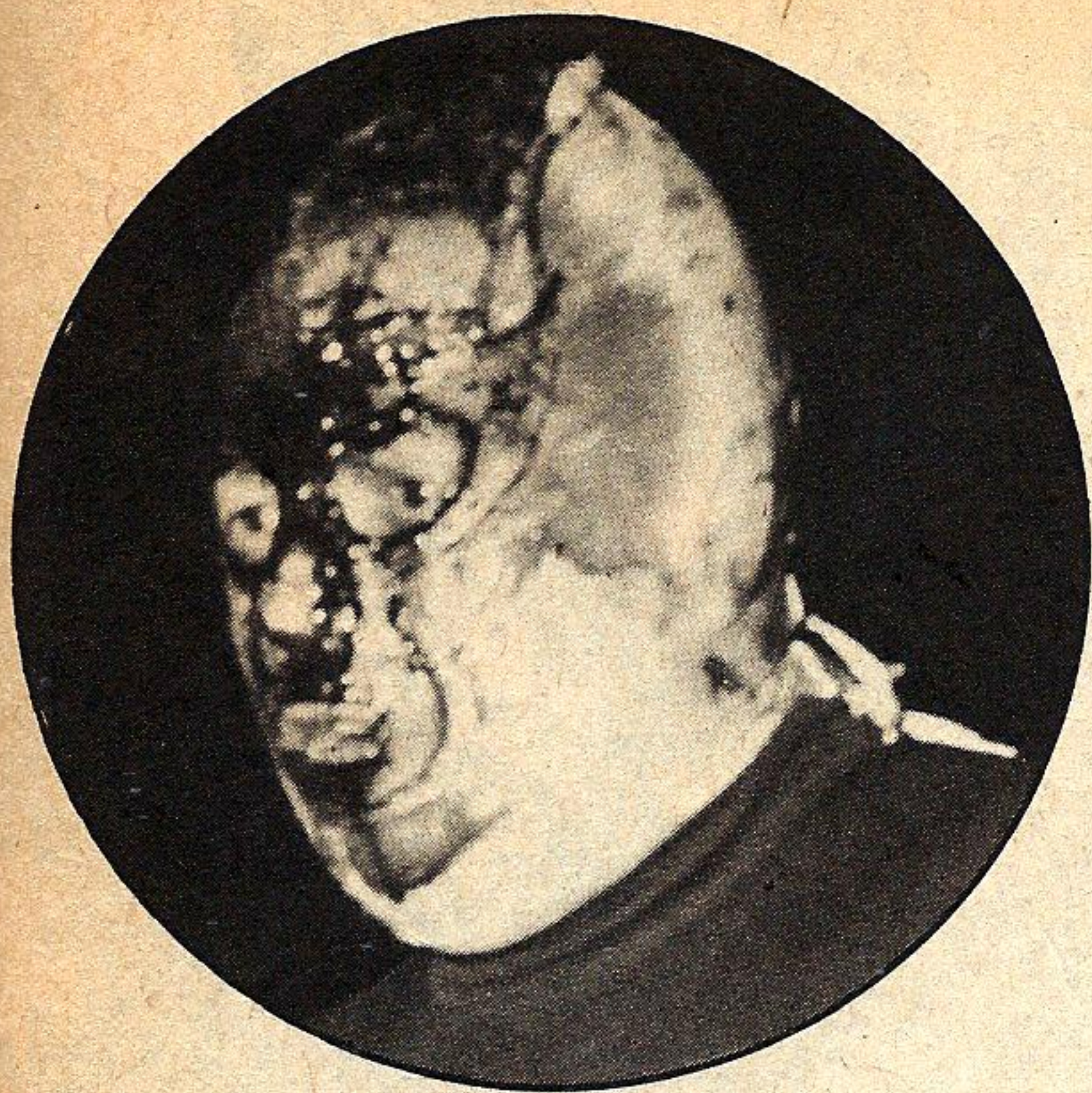
"My brother, Jack Brisco, draws capacity crowds every time he wrestles Dory Jr. In all their matches blood has been spilled only once—and that was an accident. Fans know they're going to see a clean, scientific match and it's

always a sellout. How does Ladd's theory explain that?"

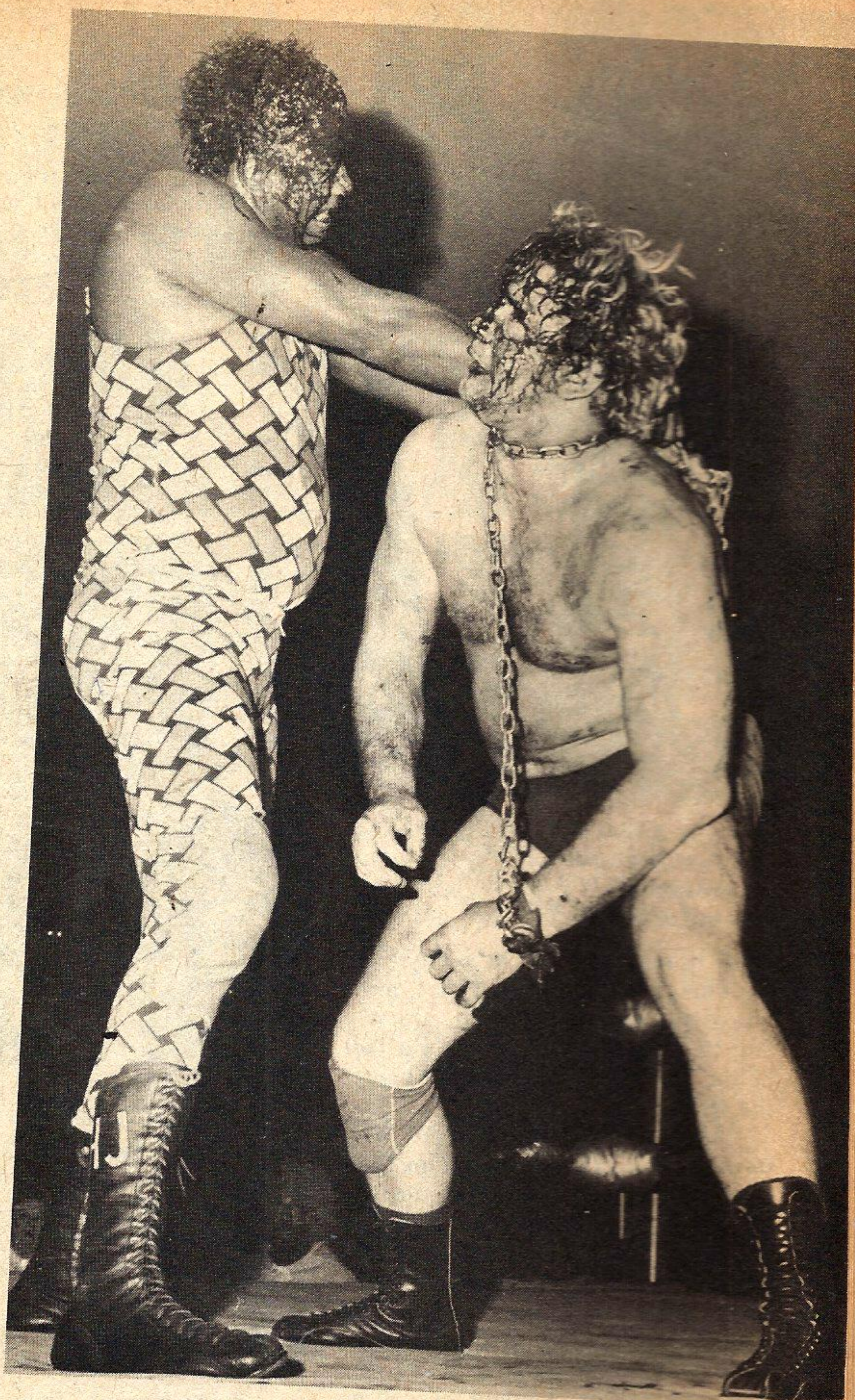
Billy Graham, himself the victim of some bloody defeats, lays the blame elsewhere.

"The whole thing is a smokescreen laid down by your so-called scientific wrestlers," he explained. "When I wrestled Billy Robinson I expected a scientific match, which is always fine with me. That's the reputation he has.

"Well he pulled a foreign object on me and bloodied me with it. I took it away from him, and when I tried to use it on him I was disqualified. I've found out that many of these



Even a mask is no protection against a bloody head, as The Assassin (above) discovers. Abdullah the Butcher (left) must take much of the blame for the slaughter of many stars. Terry Funk (right), who winds up in more bloodbaths than most grapplers, says the increase in violence is because wrestling is becoming more competitive.



so-called 'scientific' guys use sneaky tactics like that. So what happens? We have to fight fire with fire. And because these other guys have the gilt-edged reputations—we get blamed for it!"

In all of professional wrestling today, probably no man has been attacked as often or has shed as much blood as Bobby Heenan. Hockey players, known for the number of stitches they carry on their faces, do not get cut as often as Bobby.

"When I see one of my men being unfairly and ruthlessly attacked I'll go in there to protect him because I know he won't be protected by the

referee like his opponent," Bobby told us. "And when I'm in there I'm fair game. I have no complaints about that."

"But of all the injuries I've sustained, I'd say maybe 25 percent were caused because I ran into the ring to protect my men. The other 75 percent were caused while I was at ringside shouting instructions to my men or after the match when I was brutally attacked enroute to the dressing room. And these attacks come from men—and I use the term loosely—like Bruiser, Crusher and that halfwit Cowboy Ellis."

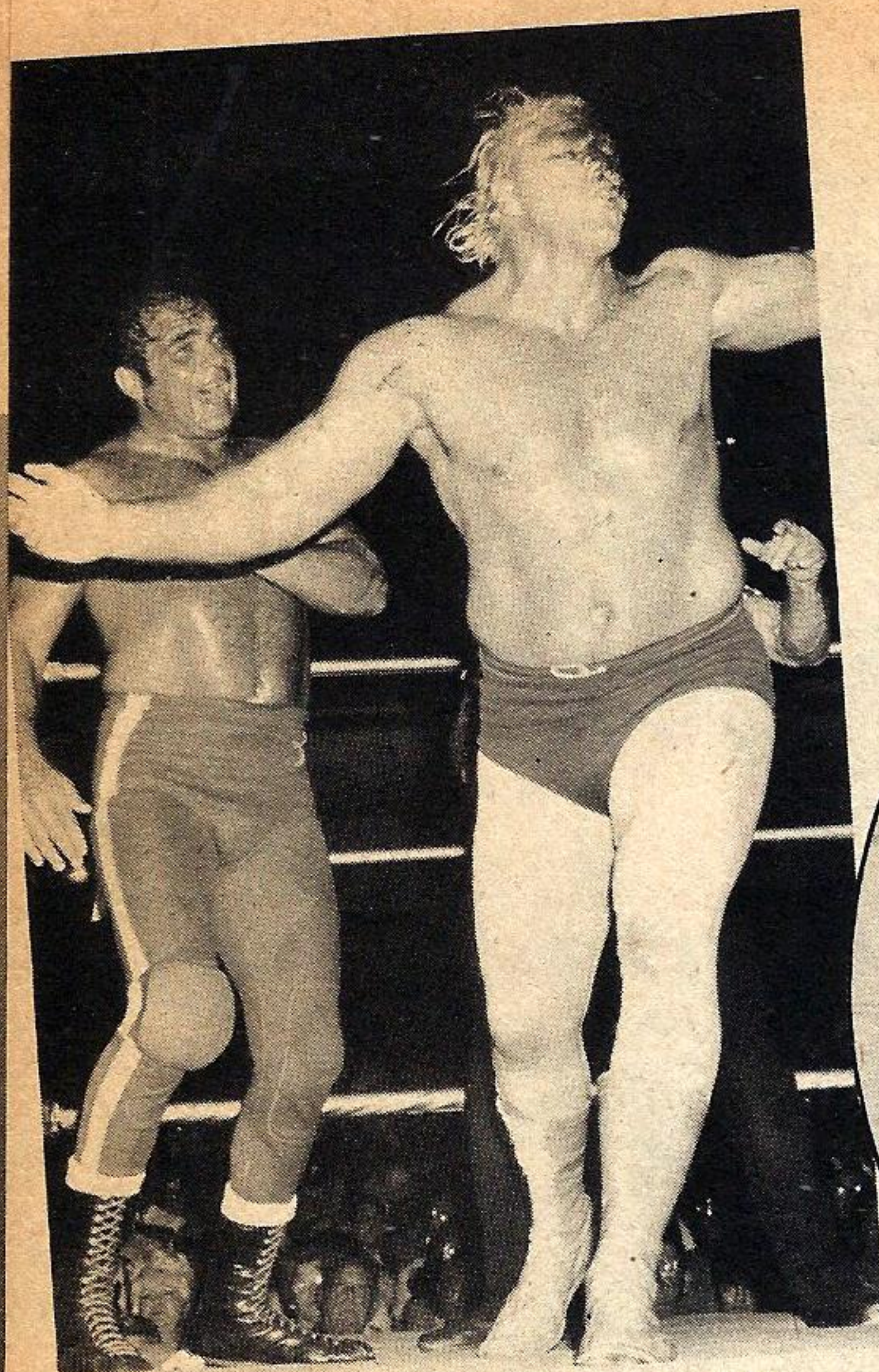
"One time, and you can check this

with officials in Indianapolis if you don't believe me, I was attacked in the dressing room by both Bruiser and Crusher after a match. My Blackjacks were both in the showers and had no idea what was happening. When they got out they found me lying in my own blood on the floor."

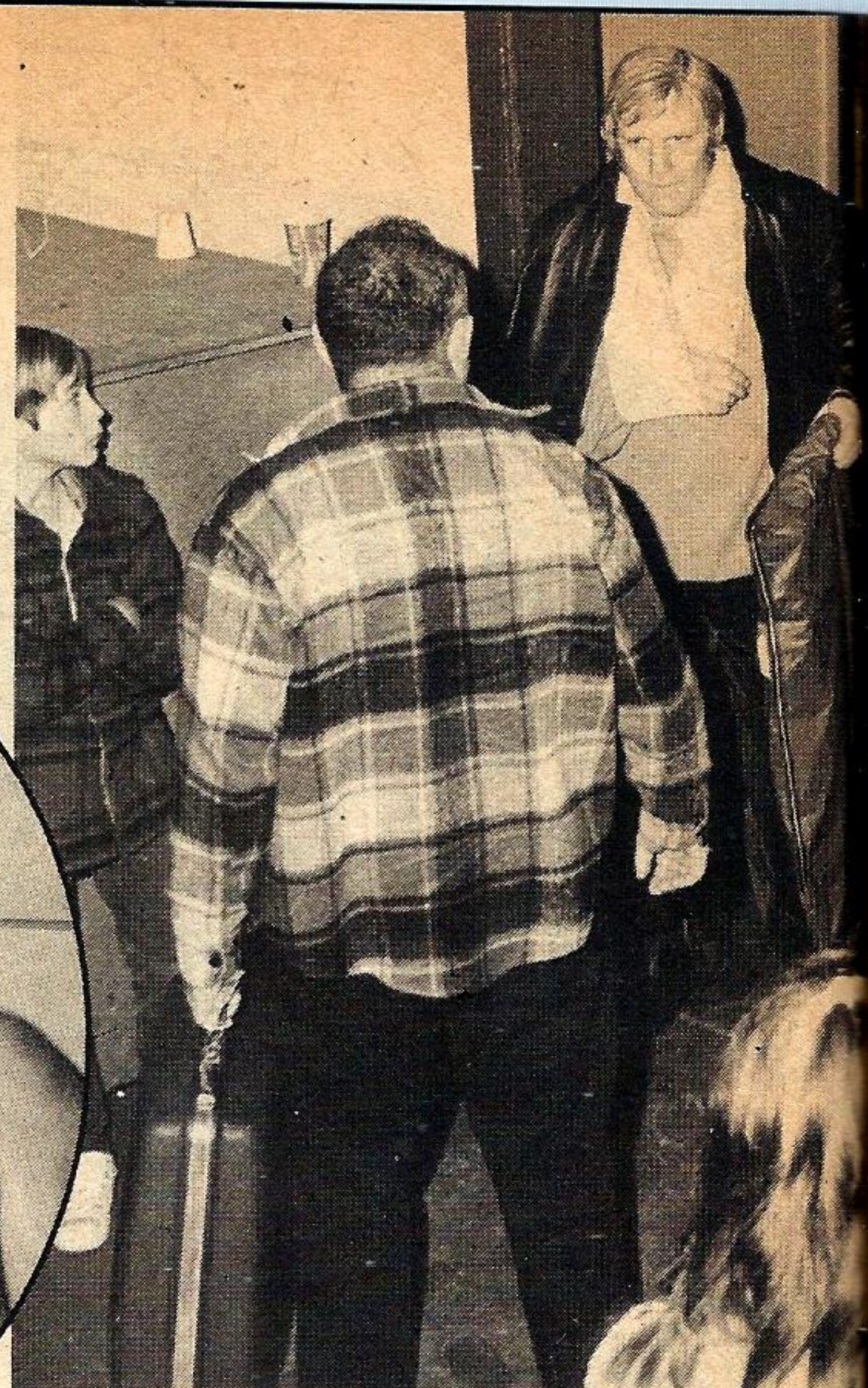
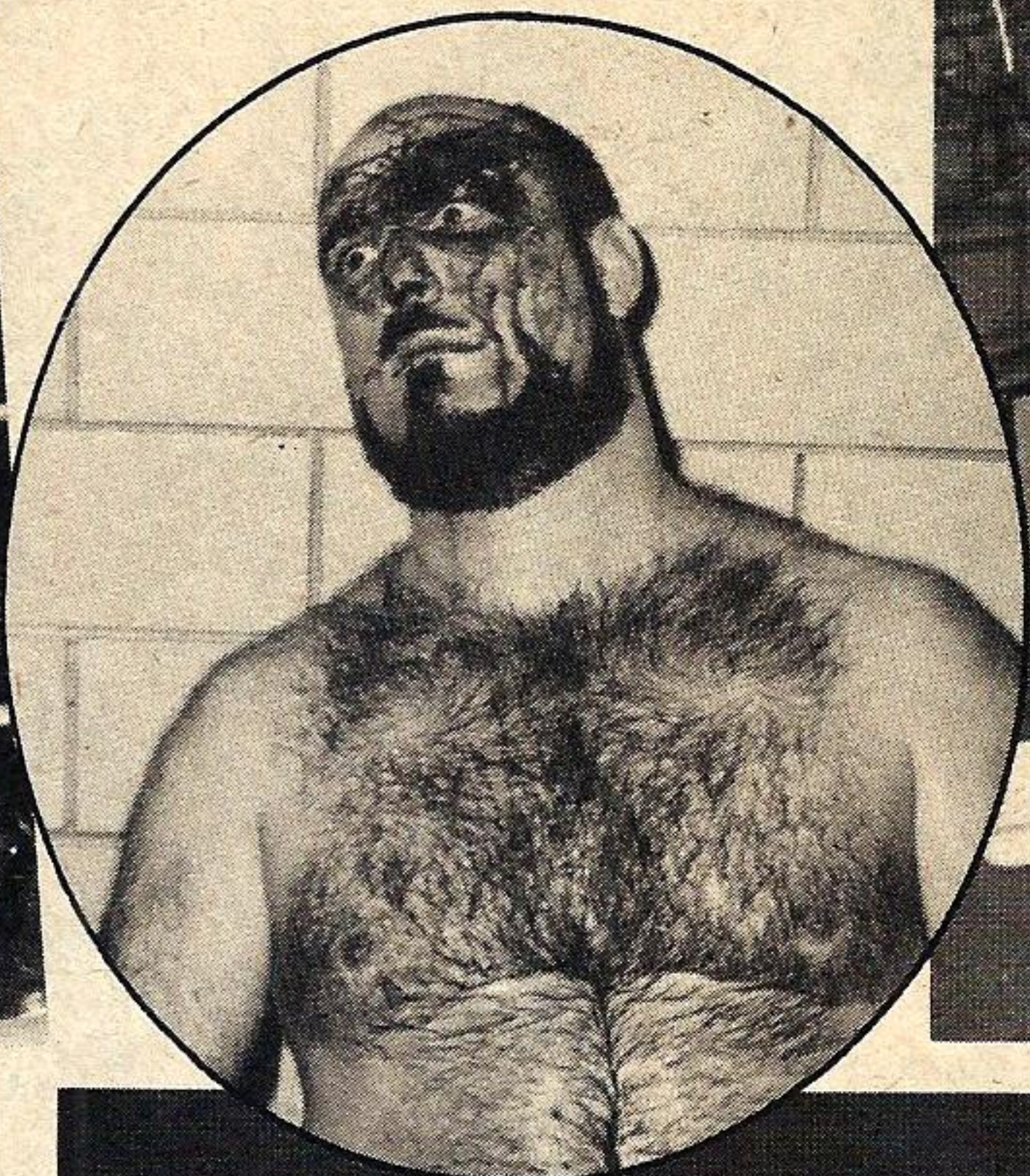
Terry Funk, perhaps second only to Heenan in amount of blood shed, dismisses all the above theories in favor of a simpler explanation.

"Like everything else," he said, "wrestling is becoming more and more competitive. You've really got to scratch to get to the top and espe-

Continued



Lord Al Hays (right) leaves the arena after suffering a shoulder separation. Mad Dog Vachon (below) is practically in shock after a particularly brutal match against Danny Hodge in Omaha, Nebraska.



"Superstar" Billy Graham insists the entire violence issue "is a smokescreen laid down by the so-called scientific wrestlers."

cially to stay there. That's where the big money is. Because of that, most wrestlers, myself included, are willing to take bigger risks. It's a fact of life. The bigger the prize the bigger the risk.

"Men like Ciclon Negro, who have no respect for life including their own, will stop at nothing to destroy an opponent. That's why he's one of today's biggest drawing cards. So when I'm wrestling Negro, I have to be prepared to receive horrible punishment and to give it back as well. If I'm not ready to make that kind of sacrifice, I might as well go back to being a preliminary wrestler like I was when I first started in this sport."

Wrestlers like Negro, when asked to explain their actions, fall back on the old argument of "law of the jungle" and "kill or be killed." In effect, they're saying the same thing as Terry.

So if Funk's analysis is correct, what it boils down to is that wrestlers are so worried about what opponents MIGHT do—they both wind up doing just those things in the name of self protection.

Further complicating the problem are wrestlers such as The Sheik and Abdullah the Butcher, who know no



Bobby Heenan claims 75 percent of his injuries have been caused by wrestlers attacking him in the dressing room or outside the ring. Blackjack Mulligan and Blackjack Lanza once found Bobby lying in a pool of his own blood—unconscious—on the dressing room floor.

other way of wrestling. When doing the research for the "This Is Your Life" story we did on The Sheik, we discovered every man where he comes from is trained to defend himself in just that style, using teeth, nails, foreign objects, and even fire, if necessary. Not to use every trick at your command is considered unmanly.

Abdullah, who is little beyond an untamed savage, cannot be expected to understand the concept of rules. So when an opponent meets him, or

someone like him, he must prepare for the worst.

Let's add up the theories and assume, for the sake of argument, that all or partially all are correct. If the majority of fans, as Ladd claims, want blood and violence, and the promoters, to be successful, must give it to them, and if the seeds of violence are sown by both scientific wrestlers (as Graham says) and by animals (as Funk claims), what, if anything, can be done to reverse the trend? (Continued on page 62)

THE MILLION DOLLAR ROOKIE

Chavo Guerrero makes quick work of opponent Mickey Doyle with a powerful backflip to the mat!

NONE OF THE wealthy businessmen and government dignitaries needed to be told how important an athletic championship is to a nation's reputation. A world title holder brings honor to all his countrymen. Each man present had benefited from the international reputation of Mil Mascaras, wrestling champion.

The men gathered to bring yet another wrestling honor to Mexico. They came to meet Chavo Guerrero, a young man with exceptional wrestling skill. They came with an offer they hoped Chavo would not refuse: they would provide all the funds he required—up to \$1 million—in order for the young athlete to capture the N.W.A. wrestling championship.

They explained how his title would bring Mexico millions of dollars in publicity and prestige. Even Chavo's hometown of Juarez would be visited by members of the world press, bringing this area of Mexico international renown.

Chavo listened intently as they promised him everything a wrestler

could ever hope to have. He would have use of a private gymnasium and funds to consult wrestling experts all over the world. He would have every advantage money could buy. Chavo didn't even have to pay the men back; he has the option of returning a portion or all the money at his own convenience if his pride demanded. Every man there, however, was quite willing to never see their contributions again.

Finally, it was time for the young man to speak. One had to admire his poise in front of the most powerful men in his nation.

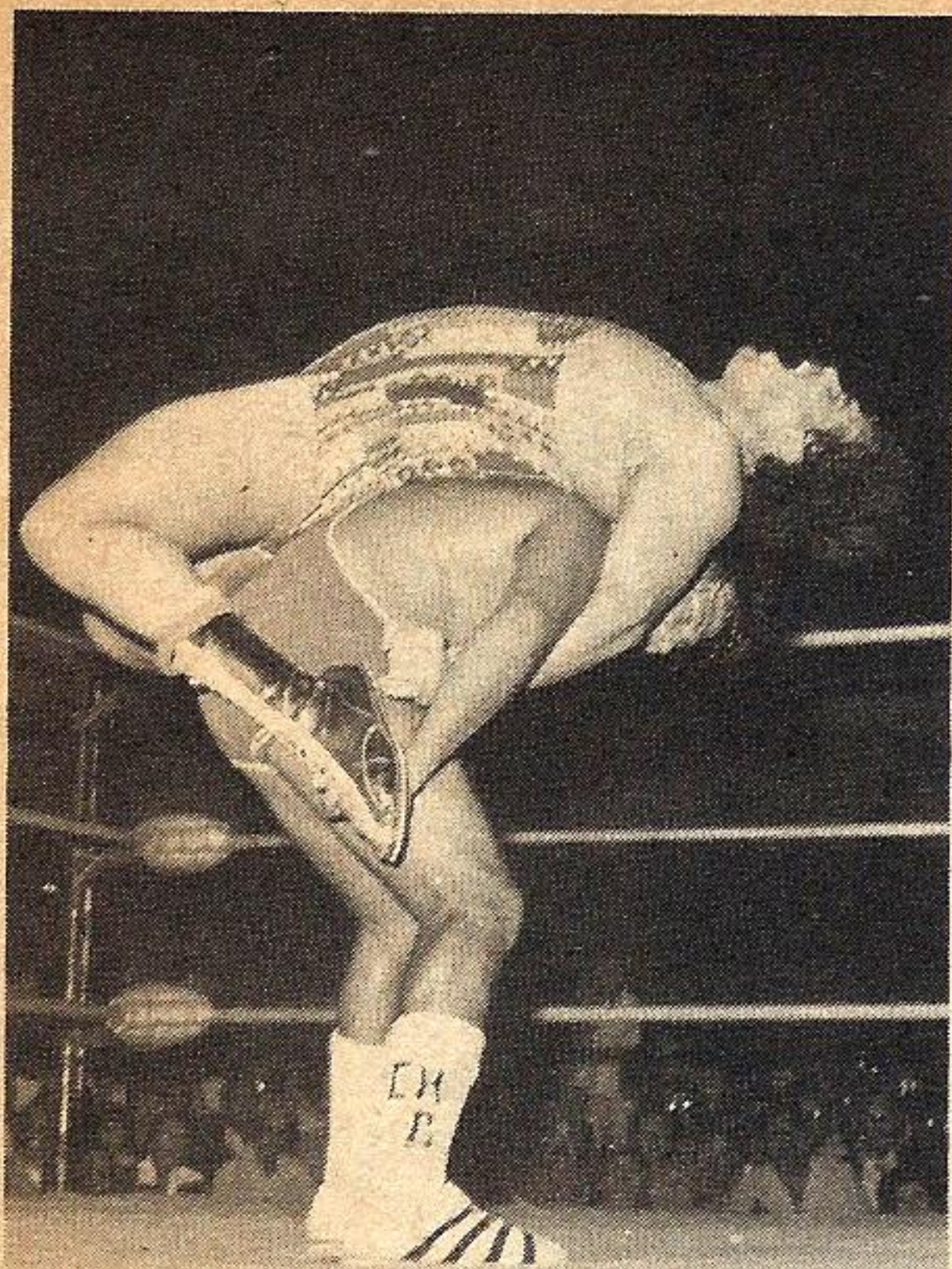
"Naturally," Chavo began, "this is the most thrilling day of my life. Most men never even dream of an offer like this. I won't pretend I'm not awed by this entire scheme. I've never even considered having this kind of money for my own.

"I also want to bring the N.W.A. championship to Mexico. It would give many people in my town a great thrill; I owe them all much for their many kindnesses. We are all after the same goal.

"However, I feel uncomfortable owing anyone this much money; I couldn't accept it as a gift. I could conceivably earn much more than any amount I could borrow. Your terms are incredibly generous. Yet I

The most respected men in Mexico are determined to make Chavo Guerrero the next N.W.A. champion. They are one million dollars determined!

PHOTOS BY THEO EHRET



Mexico's million dollar rookie uses an armlock (right) and a backbreaker (above) to defeat his opponent, Mickey Doyle.

wouldn't be able to say I made it on my own.

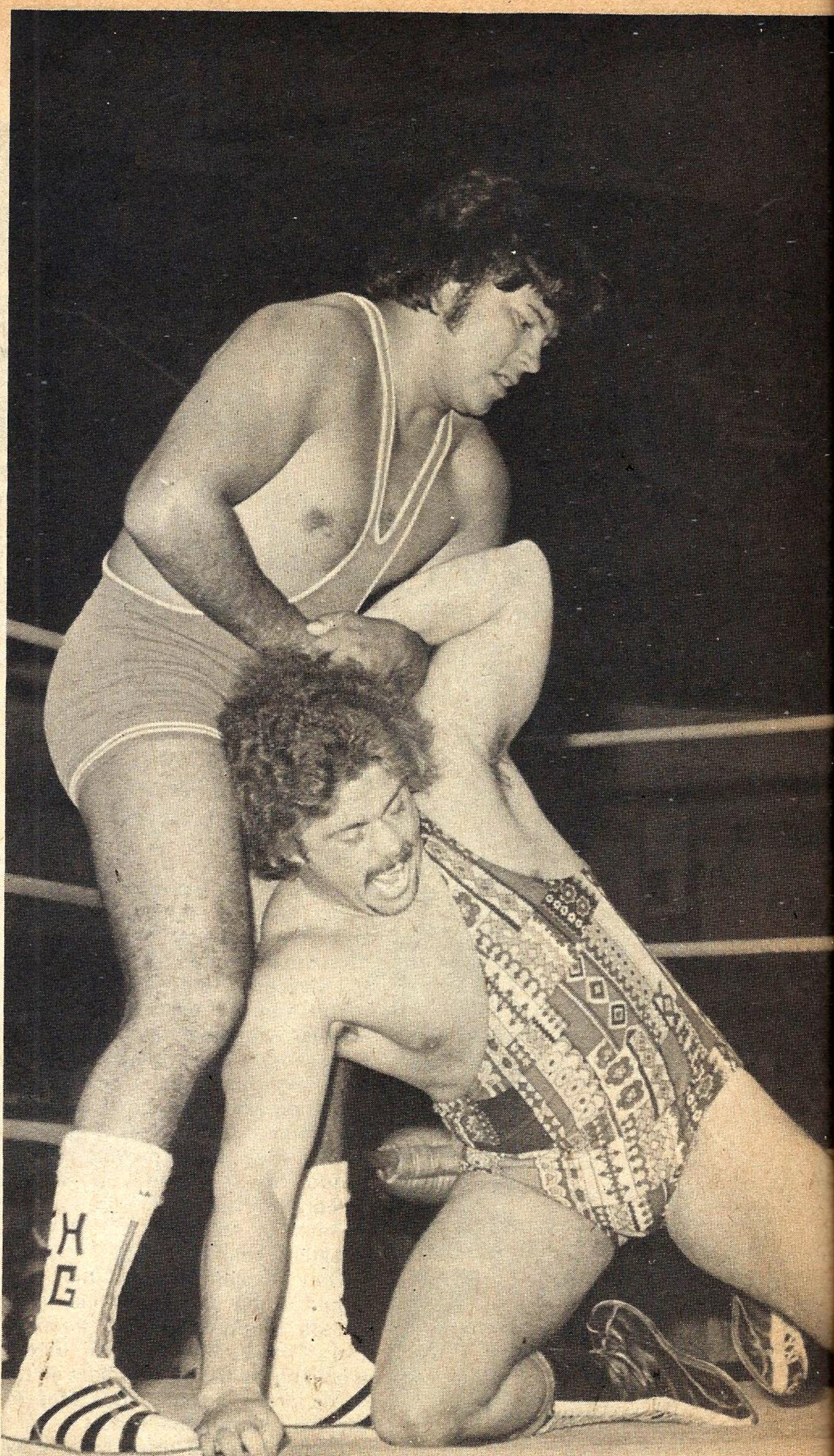
"Being a wrestling champion is a very personal accomplishment. I think you have to be a professional grappler to understand this. Maybe not—would any of you want to know your success was due to a gift from generous patrons?"

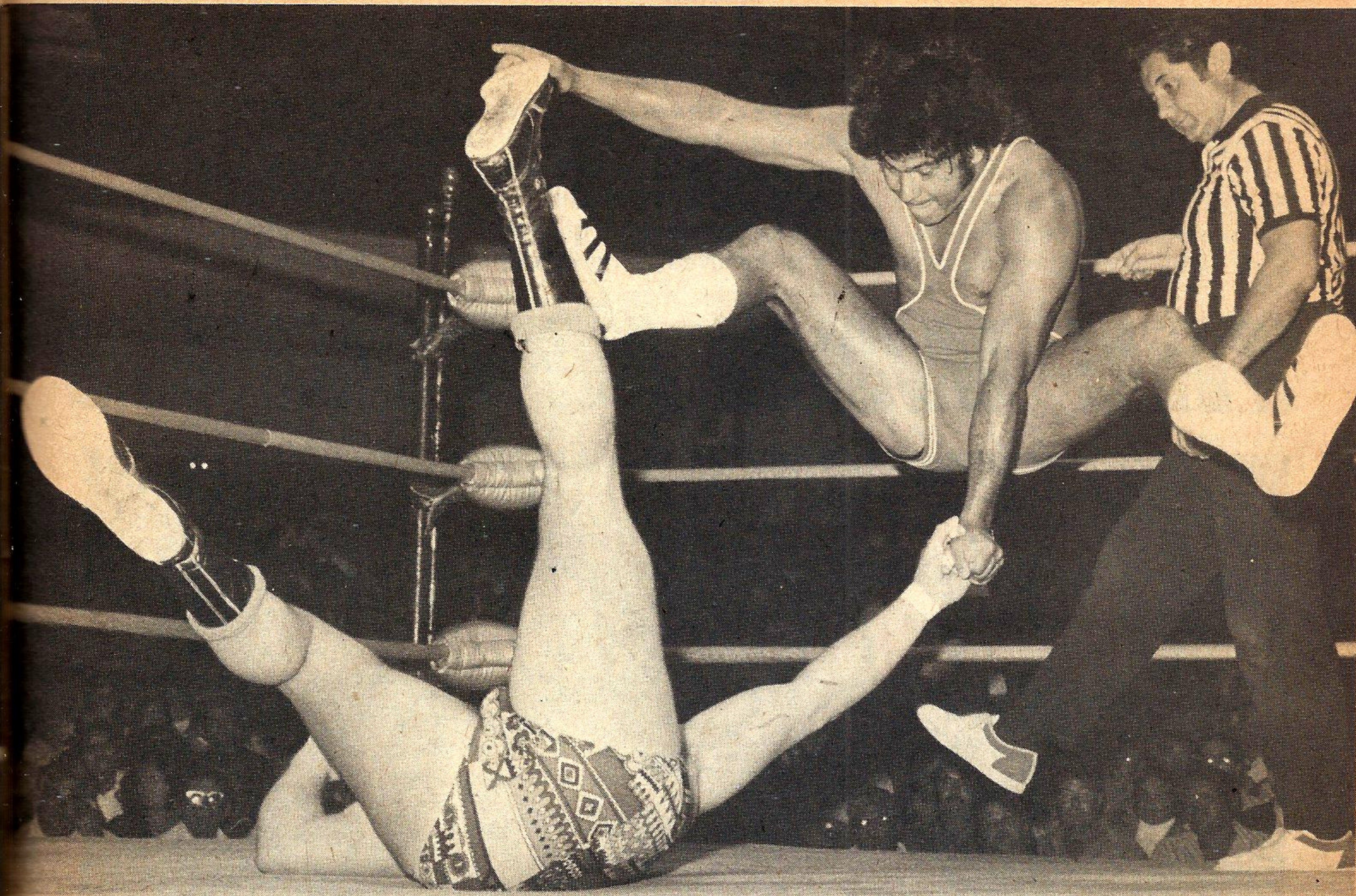
Chavo's eyes searched the room. The looks on the men's faces showed he guessed correct; none would be happy feeling indebted to another. Chavo was about to turn down the offer when one of the government officials spoke.

"May I remind you, young man," he said softly but with authority, "we are not simply discussing an athletic contest. We're considering national honor, something more important than any man in this room. What we are discussing tonight will effect every single one of our countrymen."

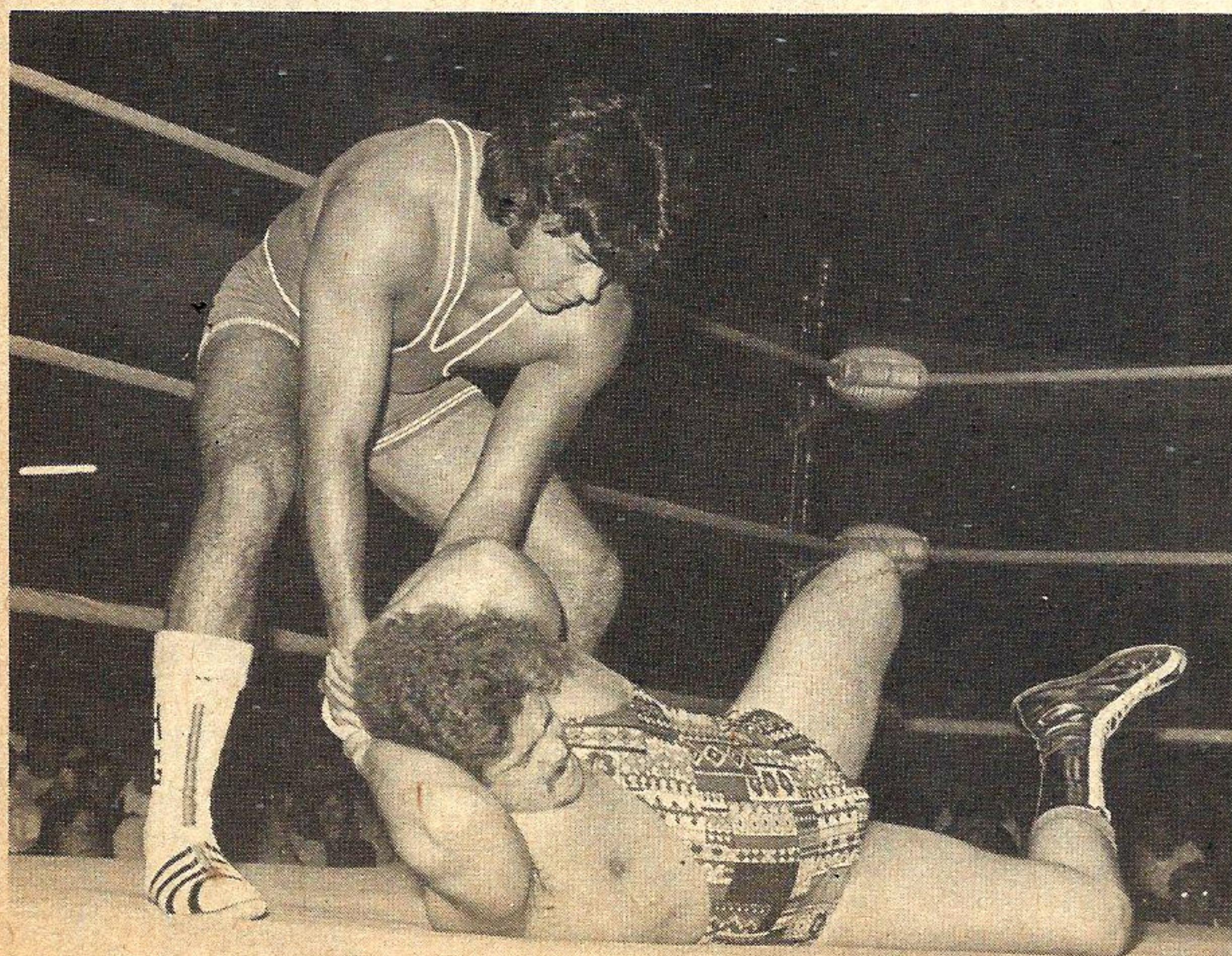
"We're approaching troubled times; the world is in a state of upheaval. Our people will need heroes to admire in the times ahead. Every success will be shared by multitudes. To jeopardize a single victory would be a criminal action against our nation."

"Chances are, Mr. Geurrero, you would become champion eventually. We would not waste our time and money here if we didn't think you were championship caliber. However, there are unforeseen problems which could rob you of





Chavo demonstrates his agility and aeronautic acrobatics on Mickey Doyle (above), then proceeds to give his opponent even more trouble with a headlock (below). Many powerful and influential men in Mexico hope Chavo can bring home a championship belt, thereby bringing more prestige to Guerrero's native country and to them!



your chance and our country of a hero.

"Money should be used to eliminate problems. You may never need a peso of our offering. However, if there are certain problems money could solve, buying the needed services to make your ascension to the title as quickly as possible makes sense. We are simply offering you funds to purchase the necessary tools. If you were a medical student, would you refuse a scholarship to a university?"

"The choice is yours," the venerated politician concluded. "You must choose between your nation or your pride. I think you'll agree that's no choice at all."

"Of course I realize," Chavo admitted, "my first duty is to my country. If I need your money, gentlemen, I'll ask for it. We are all united in aiding the people of Mexico!"

Chavo Guerrero has \$1 million to use in winning the N.W.A. championship. He may not use a penny of it; he may use it all. As a wrestler, he's a soldier for the nation of Mexico! □

ONE OF THE most interesting and ferocious battles in recent memory was recently held in St. Louis between NWA champ Harley Race and the WWA belt-holder, Bruiser. The match went on to the one hour time limit and was filled with devastating moves.

Bodies went flying across the ring. It was a combination of brutality and grace which displayed championship wrestling at its finest.

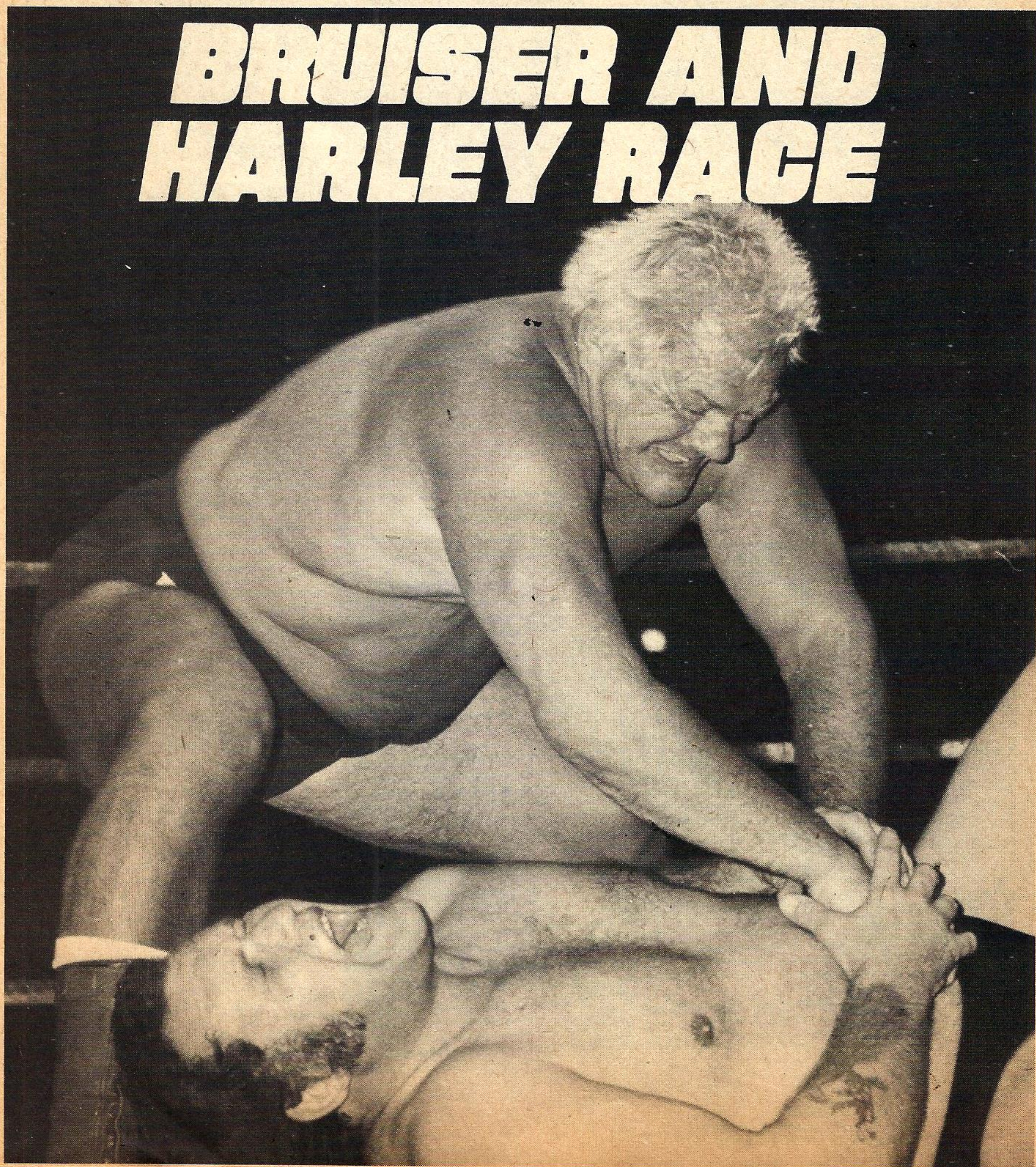
Yet this match, like so many others involving WWA battlers, received little attention, despite a crowd believed to be one of

the largest ever to attend a match in St. Louis history.

Why? Where was the media attention, the recognition that WWA stars like Bruiser should be receiving? What prevents the WWA's acceptance as one of the major associations in professional wrestling?

THE WAR BETWEEN

BRUISER AND HARLEY RACE



"I don't like to think ill of people, but I sometimes have the feeling that major federations are afraid to give us equal status. They're afraid we might try to attract fans away from their wrestling cards," said one WWA official. "That's something we'd never do."

An NWA official attending the Race-Bruiser match responded frankly to the WWA accusation:

"The WWA falls short of having the required arenas by five. That may seem like a trivial point, but there must be a set number of arenas for the federation to schedule matches

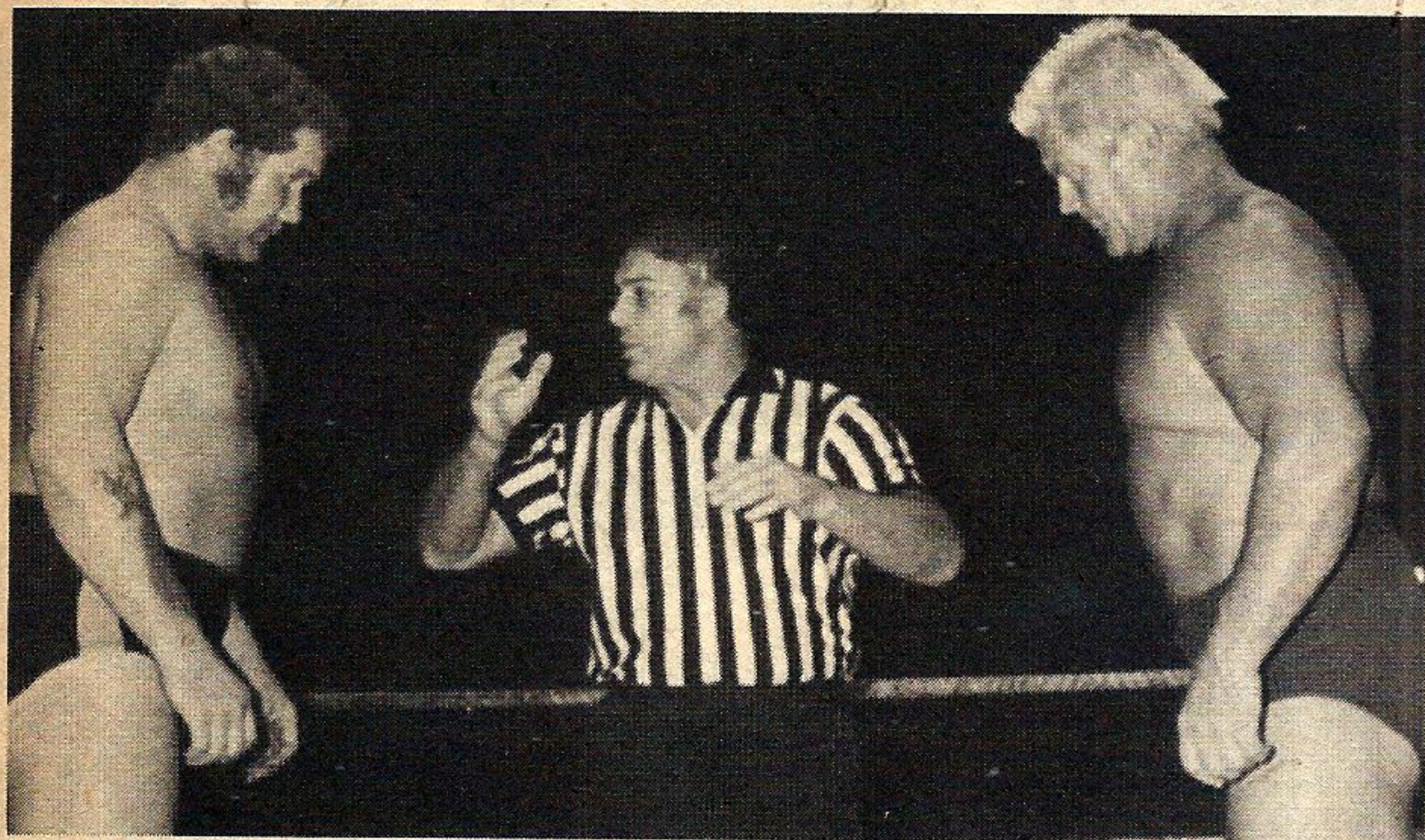
in. We're not afraid of losing fans. There are just certain rules which must be followed.

The tumultuous match between Race and Bruiser should dispel forever any doubts about the quality of inter-federation brawls. With the crowd standing and roaring from the start, the two champions, Race from the NWA and Bruiser from the WWA, tangled in a magnificent match, no reluctance, no fears, just a masterful display of wrestling ferocity.

Bruiser, who has modified his old malicious ways, fell into a Race trap and found himself in a crushing neckhold. Race growled, lowered him to the ground, quickly released his hold, and flung Bruiser around the ring by his arms. A brilliant move.

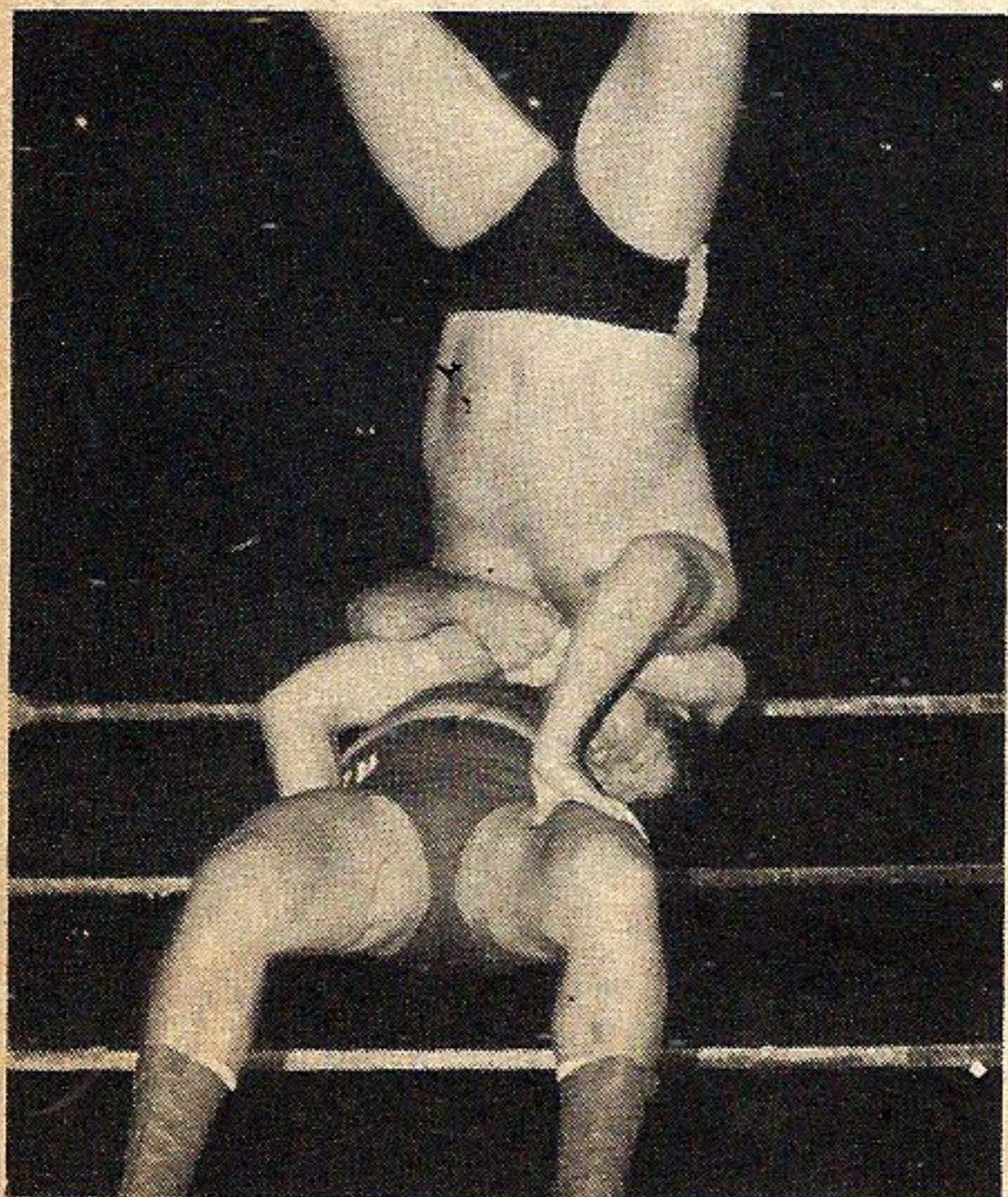
Bruiser rose to his feet and flung himself forward, his arms extended. His thick hands

(Continued on page 64)

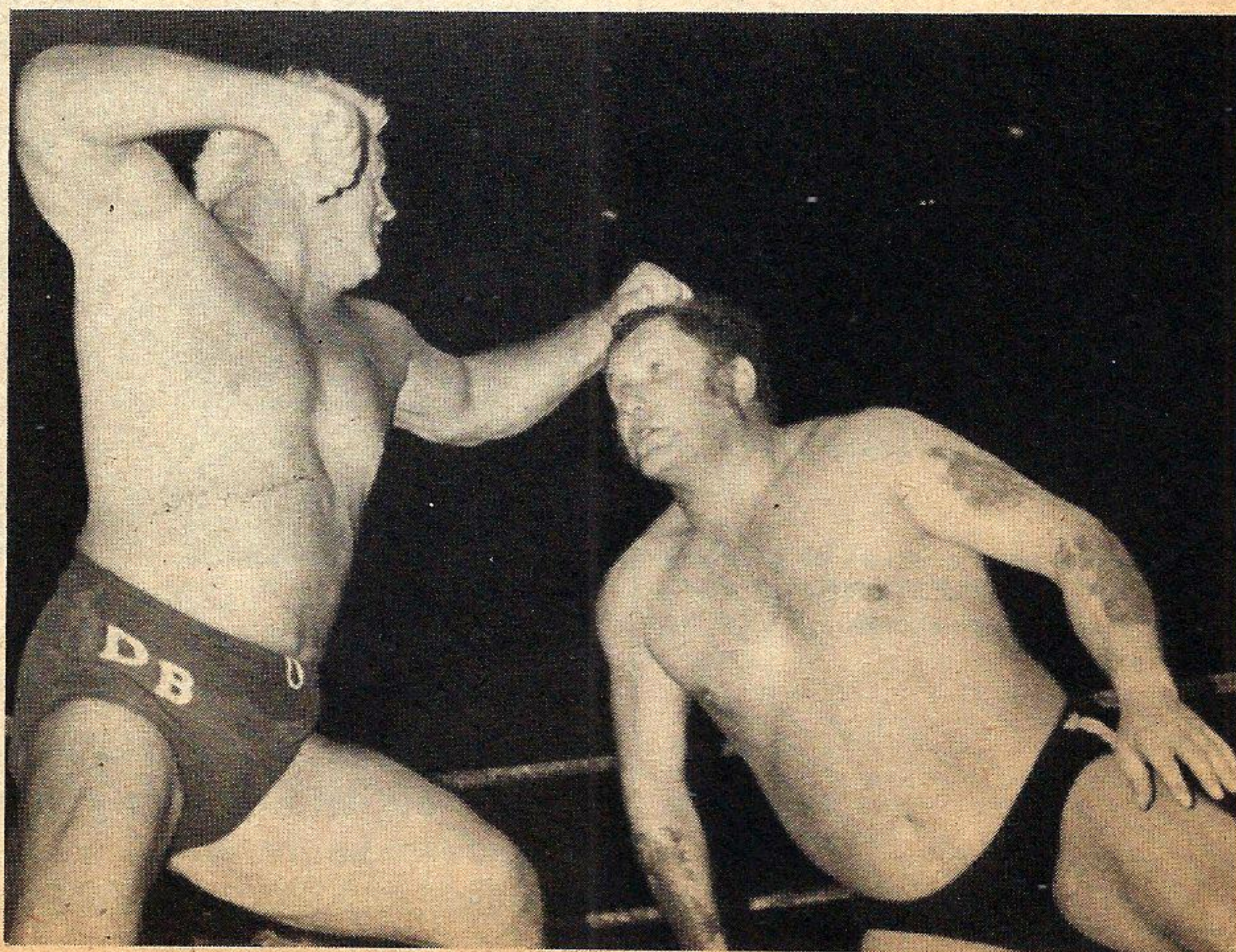


The referee explains some basic ground rules as NWA champion Harley Race and WWA champion Bruiser prepare to square off. This was a match fans in both associations eagerly anticipated for quite some time.

When two veterans like Bruiser and Harley Race have a confrontation, you know a war has to result. But in this particular battle, there was more at stake than just a result for the record books



A beautiful suplex slam by Bruiser sends Race flying (above). The match becomes a brawl as Bruiser is about to punch the NWA champion (right).



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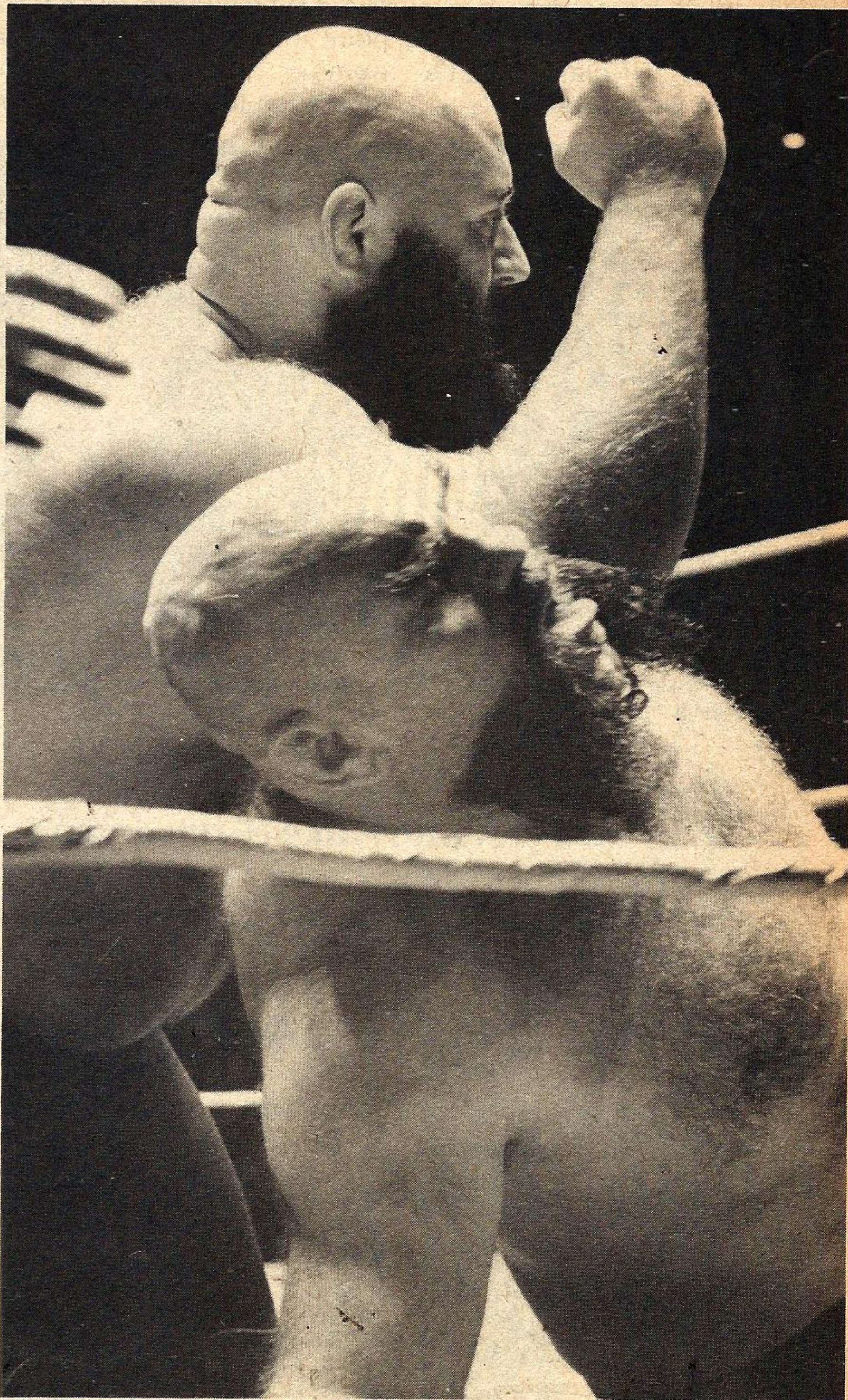
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**YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE
THIS MATCH**

(Continued from Page 8)



Bugsy McGraw digs his elbow into Ox Baker's shoulder. This was one of the calmer moments in the match. As the action went on, the battle was fought in the stands and even spectators had to flee from the action!

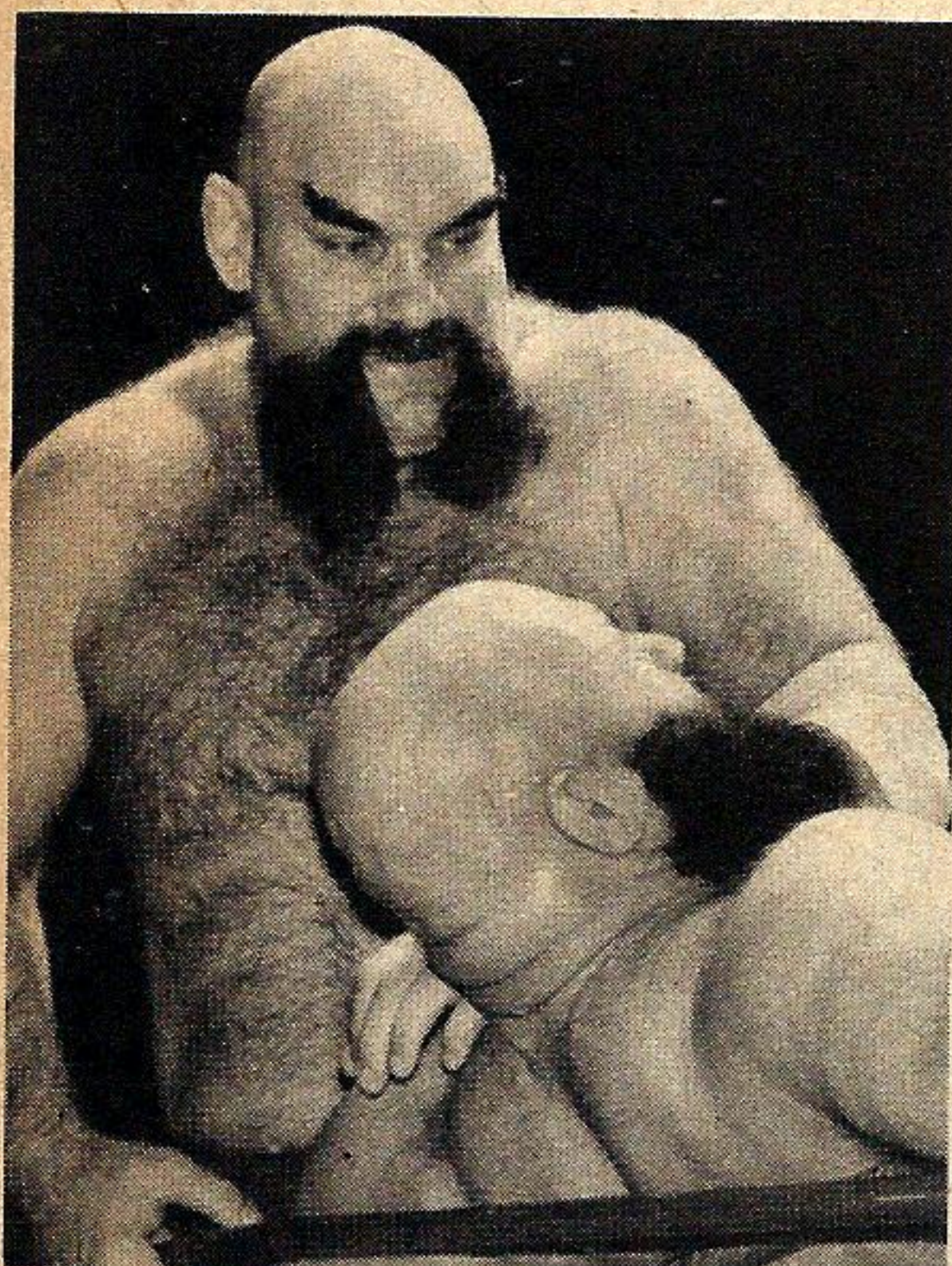
piece of hair on his skull. He bellowed triumphantly and brandished a thread.

Baker and McGraw grappled

berserkly in the center of the ring, their heavy hands clamped around each other's throat. Then Baker opened his

massive mouth and tried to bite Bugsy's beard off. McGraw screamed in pain and tried to pull away. He did, but left a clump of hair between Baker's teeth, a clump which was instantly digested, followed by a smile and a belch.

Inexplicably, McGraw stood on the ropes, glanced up at the lights and positioned his head so the glare bounced off his bald dome and pummeled Baker's eyes. Ox yelled and tried to wipe away the



Baker ties Bugsy up in the ropes and is ready to begin punching the crazed McGraw. This was one of the wildest matches ever witnessed in the history of Detroit.

temporary blindness. While Ox struggled, McGraw charged into Baker and knocked him against the ropes. Baker bounced off and landed on top of Bugsy.

McGraw reached inside his boot and pulled out a foreign substance. He shoved this into Baker's nose and ran into the far corner, laughing hysterically at Baker's anguish.

Baker jumped out of the ring and taunted McGraw. Bugsy leaped over the ropes and then ran amuck in the stands, knocking over chairs, popcorn vendors and old ladies.

See? Said you wouldn't believe it. But it's true. □

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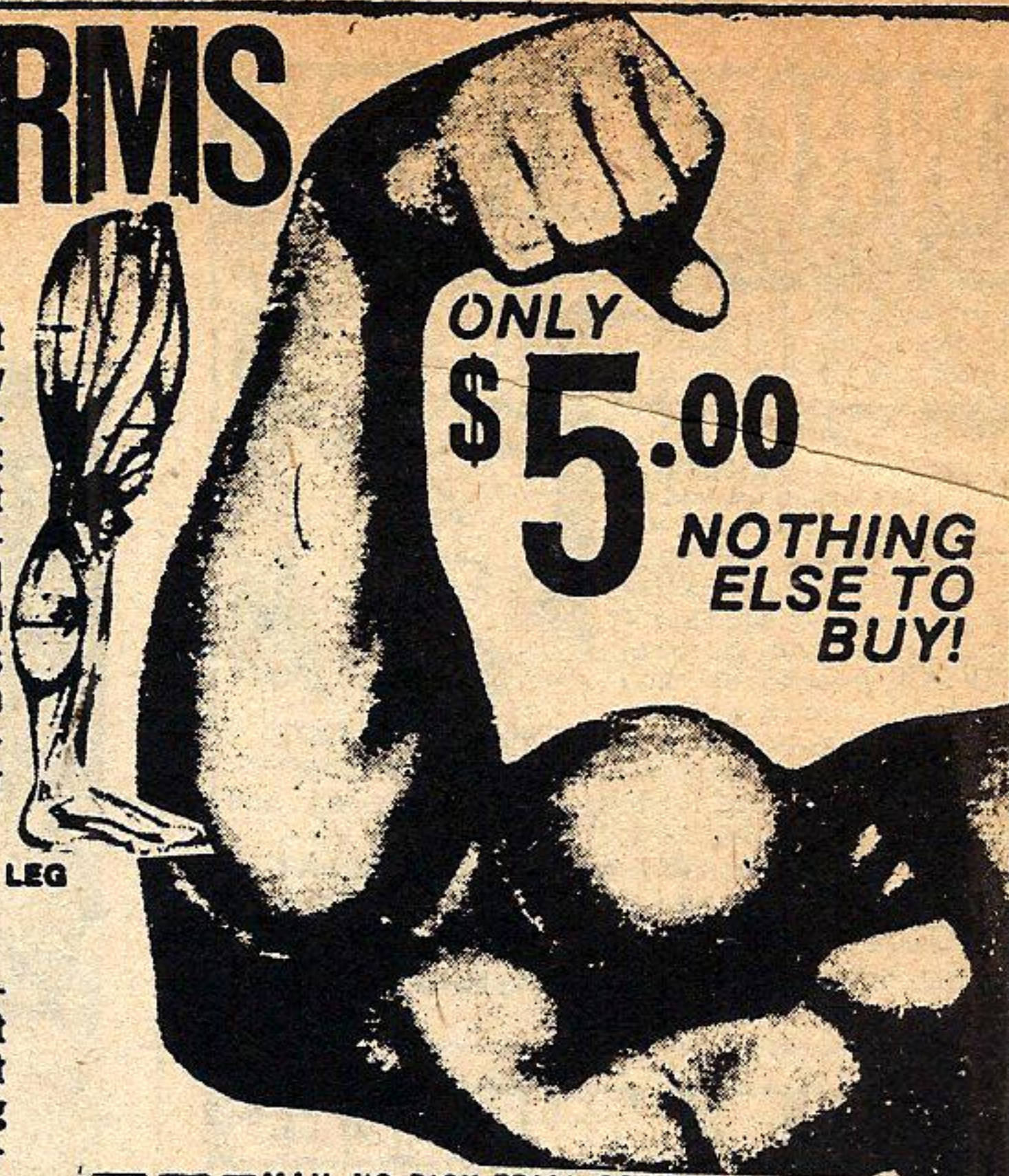
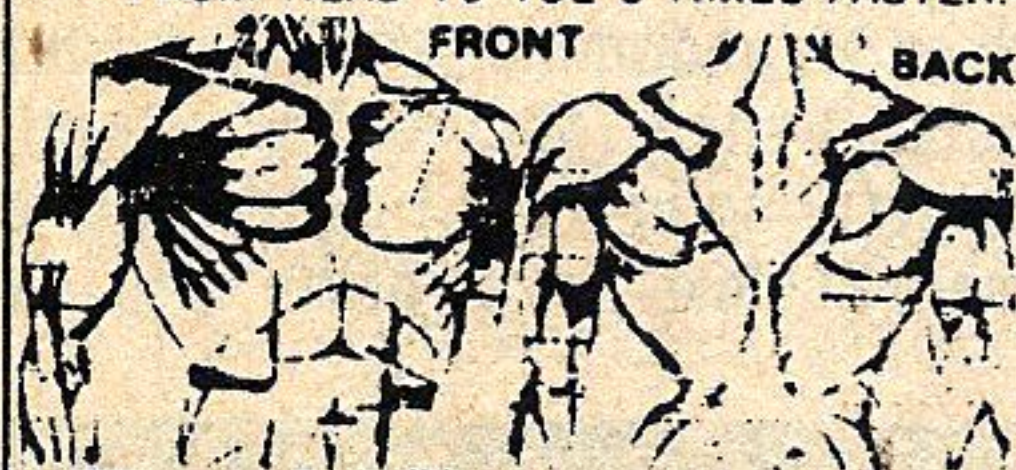
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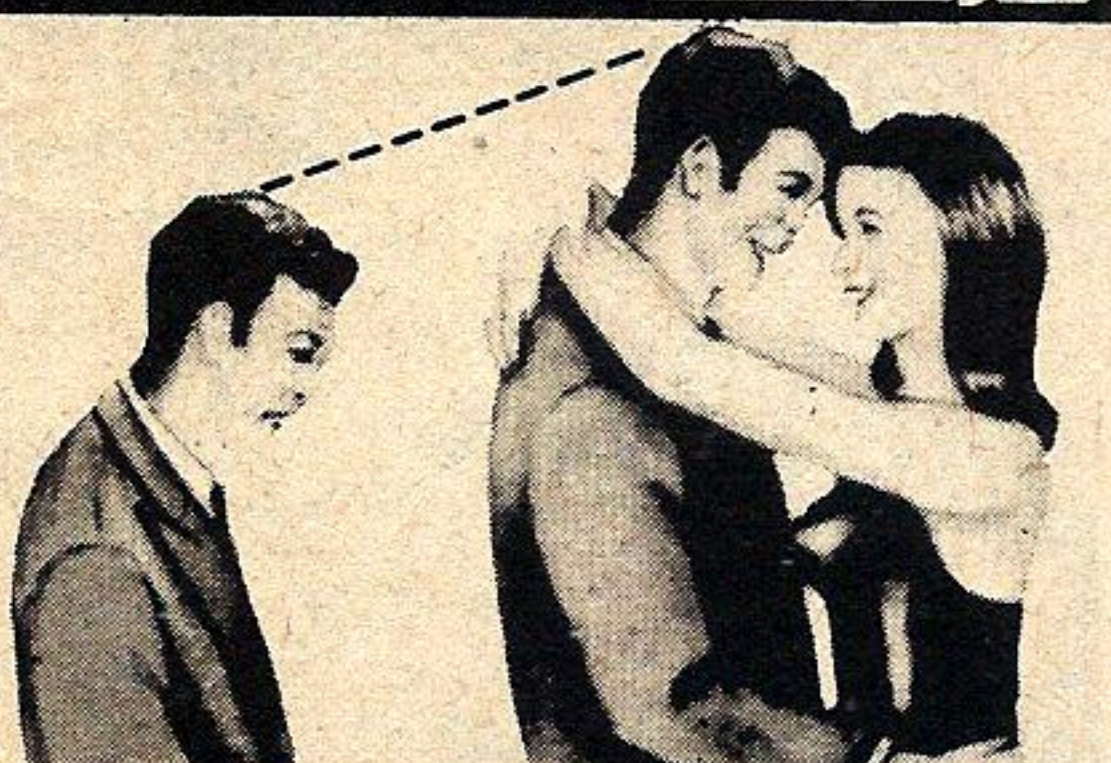
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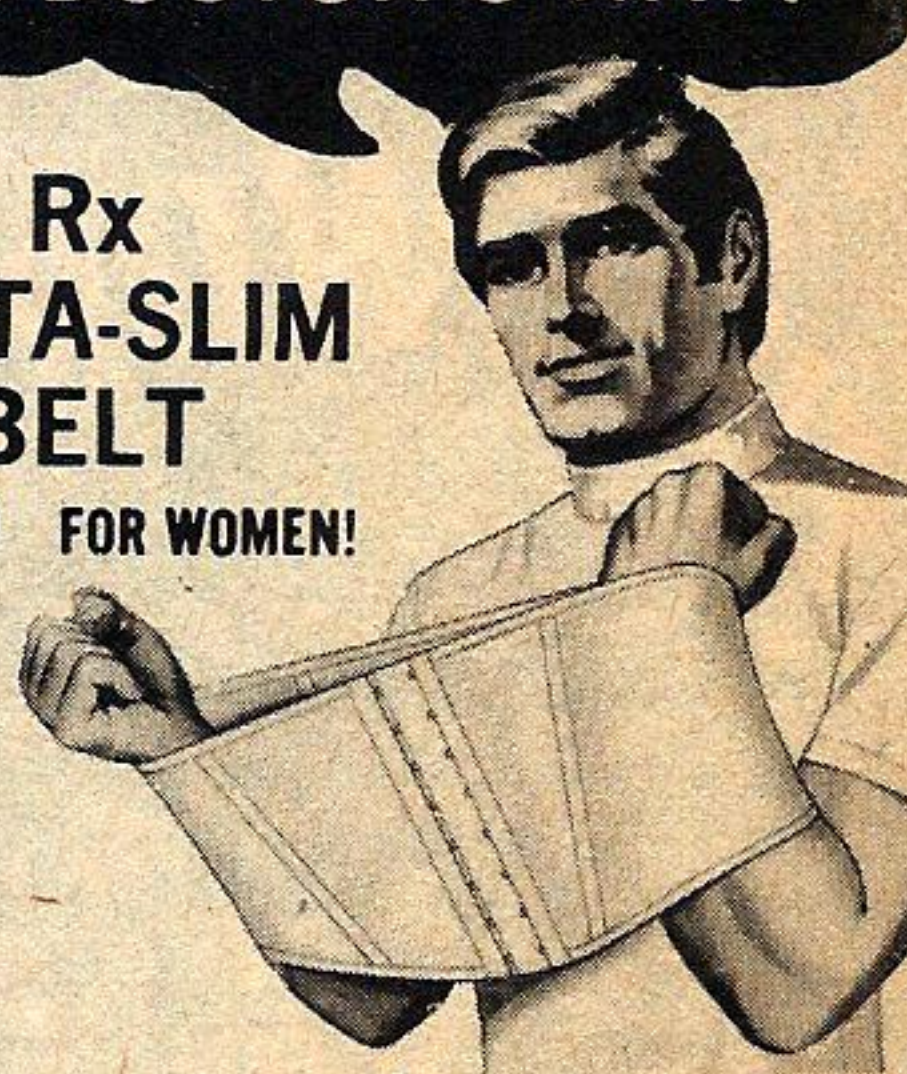
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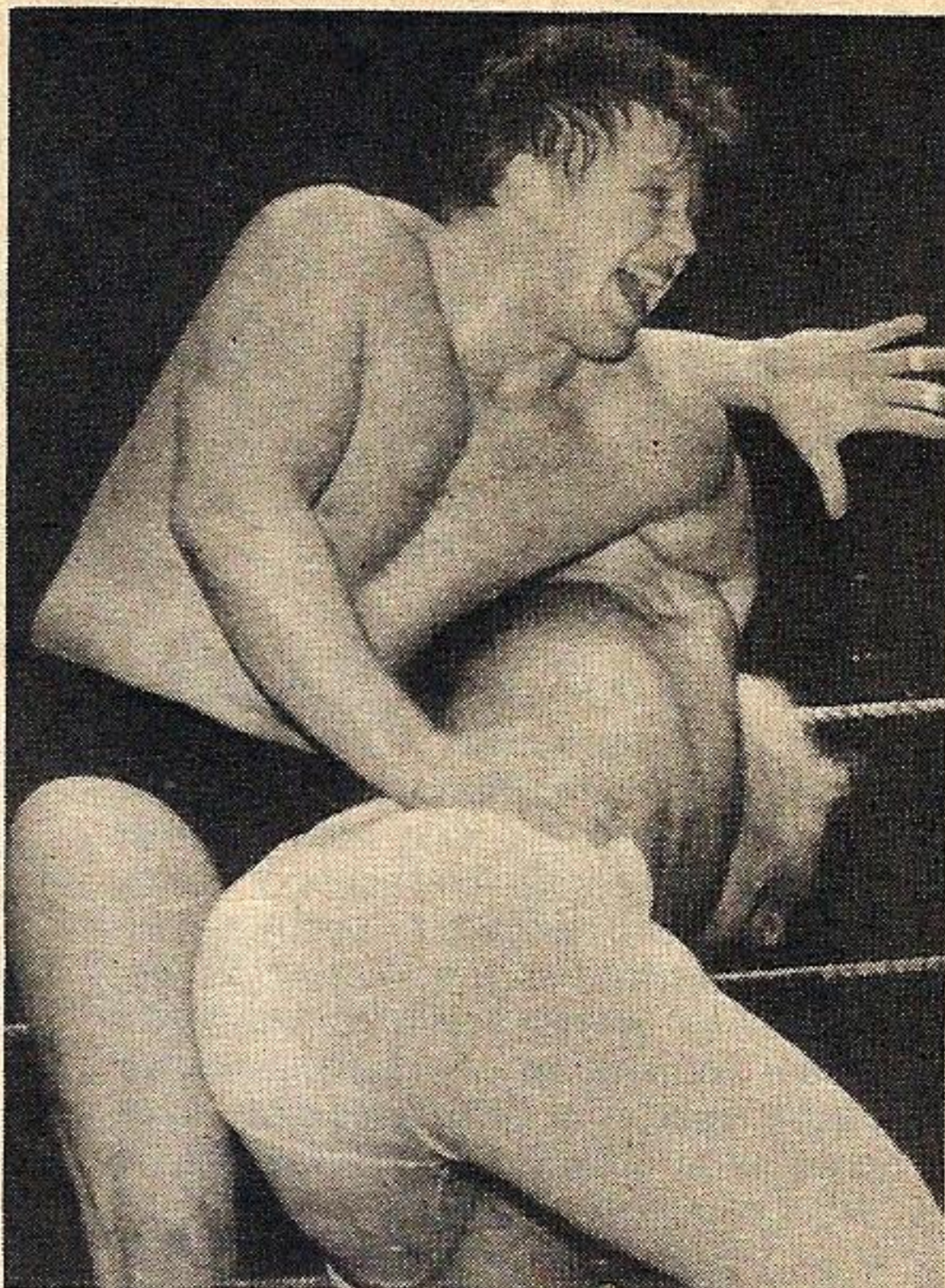


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DINO BRAVO

(Continued from Page 21)

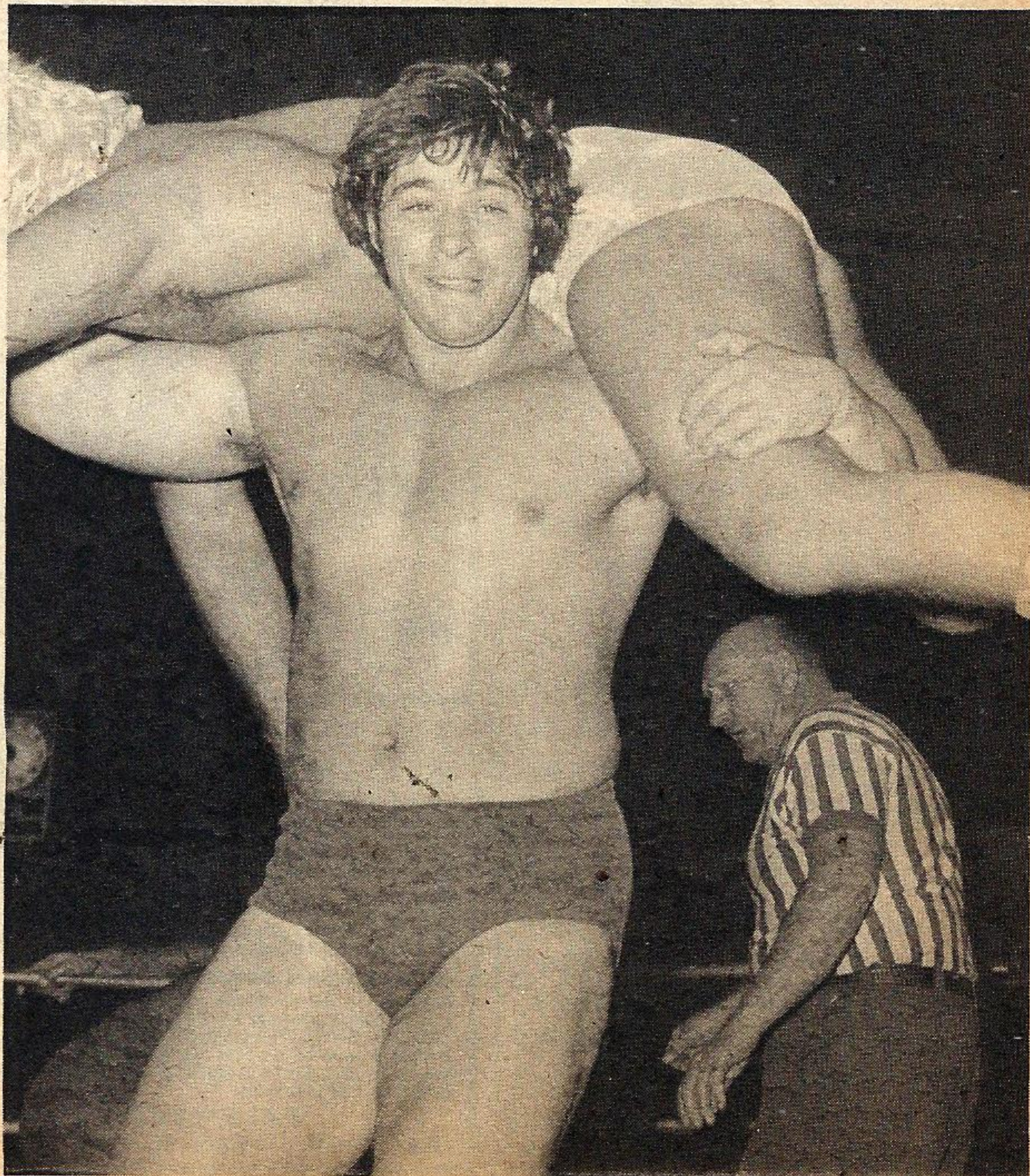


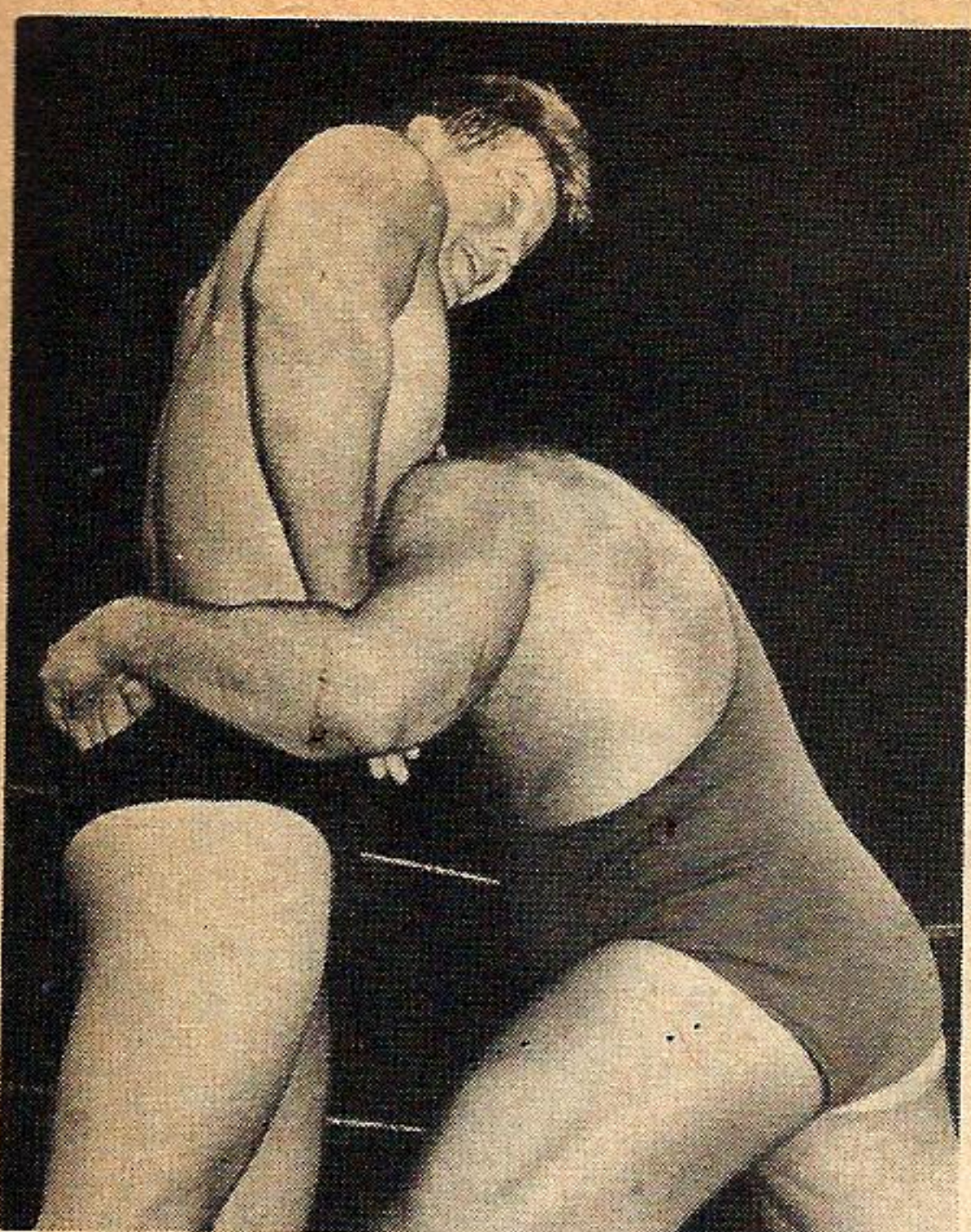
That is the crucial point. Which is *more* important, a friendship or a title? And would a title match allow the friendship to live?

"No matter what, Bob and I will always be friends," Bravo insisted. "Our friendship is more important than a belt. You don't put a price tag on friends."

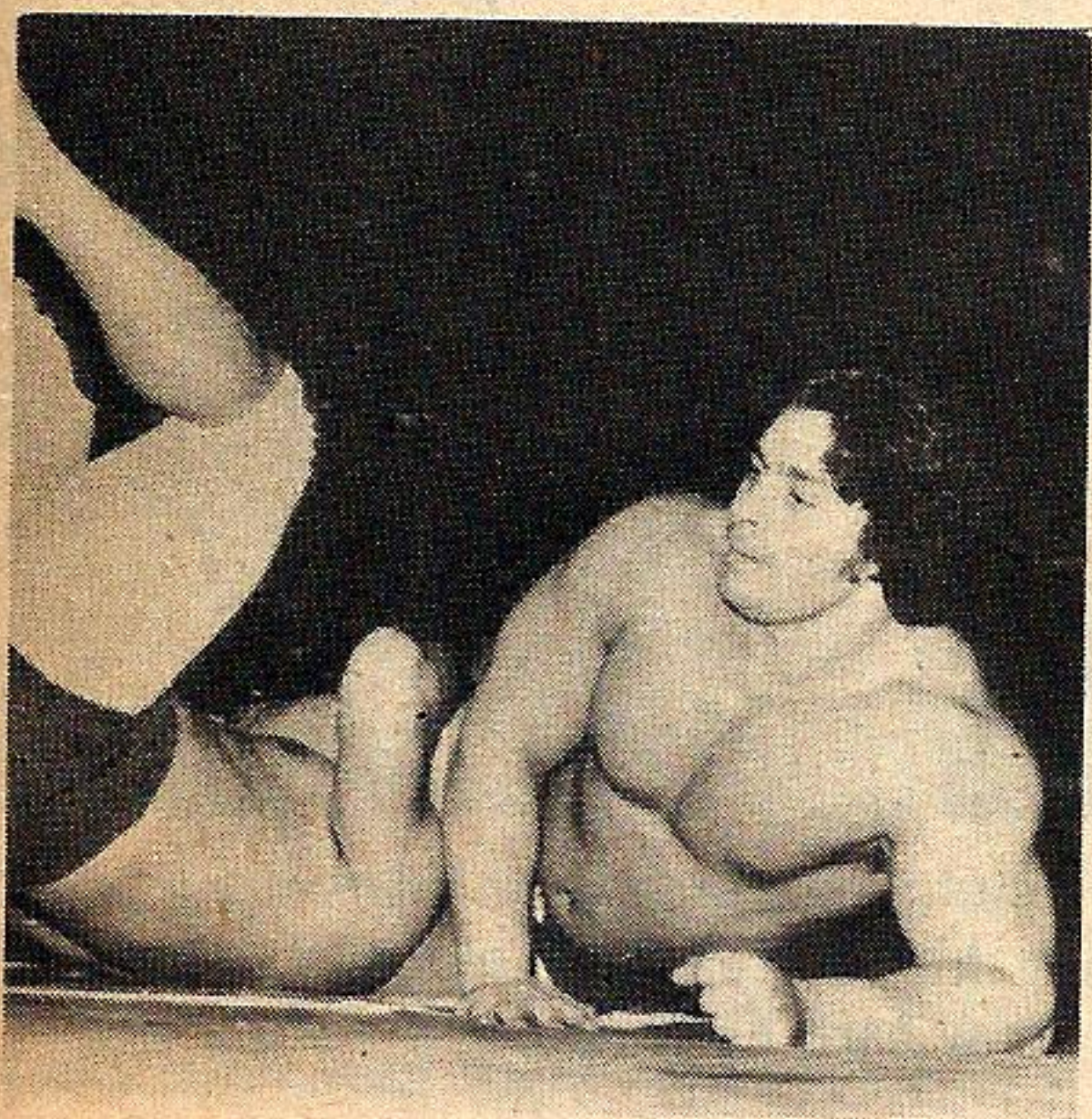
"When Dino climbs into the ring, he's just like any other opponent," Backlund said. "But that doesn't mean that after the match we can't go out to dinner together. No, Dino is my friend, and that's all there is to it."

Bob uses an abdominal stretch in the match in which he took the WWWF title from Superstar Graham (above). Because of Dino's unpredictable style Bob might not be able to get Dino in a position like this one. Bravo uses one of his favorite holds on an opponent (below), an airplane spin. Could Backlund survive its effects?





Backlund wrestles Ken Patera (above) while Dino shows his expertise to Mr. Fuji (below). A showdown between friends Bob Backlund and Dino Bravo must take place!



At this moment, they are brave words, rigidly asserting the eternal bonds of friendship. But bonds can be broken, regardless of the affection these two men have for each other.

With characteristic compassion, Bravo has set his aim on the WWWF title while refraining from any harsh challenges. And again, with that same intrinsic decency, Backlund has welcomed his friend's challenge, understanding why it had to happen.

But what happens if there is a questionable call and Backlund loses the belt? Or Bravo loses the match? What if tempers shorten and fray the friendship?

What then, my friend, what then? ☐

INTRODUCTION

(Continued from Page 6)

angry a champion scorned can be.

Andre the Giant and Ivan Putski formed a tag team too successful to last. In fact, we felt the great individual talents of each man could be harmful in a team. So, in the November 1978 edition, we published **Andre & Putski: Someone Must Beat Them Before They Destroy Themselves!** It was a raging issue at the time, and it took our editors many sleepless nights before they decided to go ahead with the story.

They were two superstars with one goal. But when Ken Patera and Mil Mascaras signed to wrestle each other, they may have mortgaged their future. **The Match That Cost Them The WWF Championship**, from the August 1978 issue, takes a closer look.

It's been nearly nine years since we asked **Can The Slaughter Be Stopped?** This study, which first appeared in the May 1973 edition of *The Wrestler*, was sparked by the incredible violence of wrestling matches of the time. If anything, in the years since, the sport has become more brutal. Again we ask, and publish, can the slaughter be stopped?

He came to California backed by the inexhaustible riches of some of Mexico's most wealthy men. Chavo Guerrero, **The Million Dollar Rookie**, (February 1976), was a young man many felt destined for greatness.

Bruiser and Harley Race are both tough, no-nonsense grapplers. So it was expected that **The War Between Bruiser and Harley Race** would be brutal, bloody, and violent. Our May 1978 story shows that this match certainly lived up to its advance billing.

That's it for this month. Again we hope you'll realize that the *Best Of The Wrestler* is truly the best of the best! ☐

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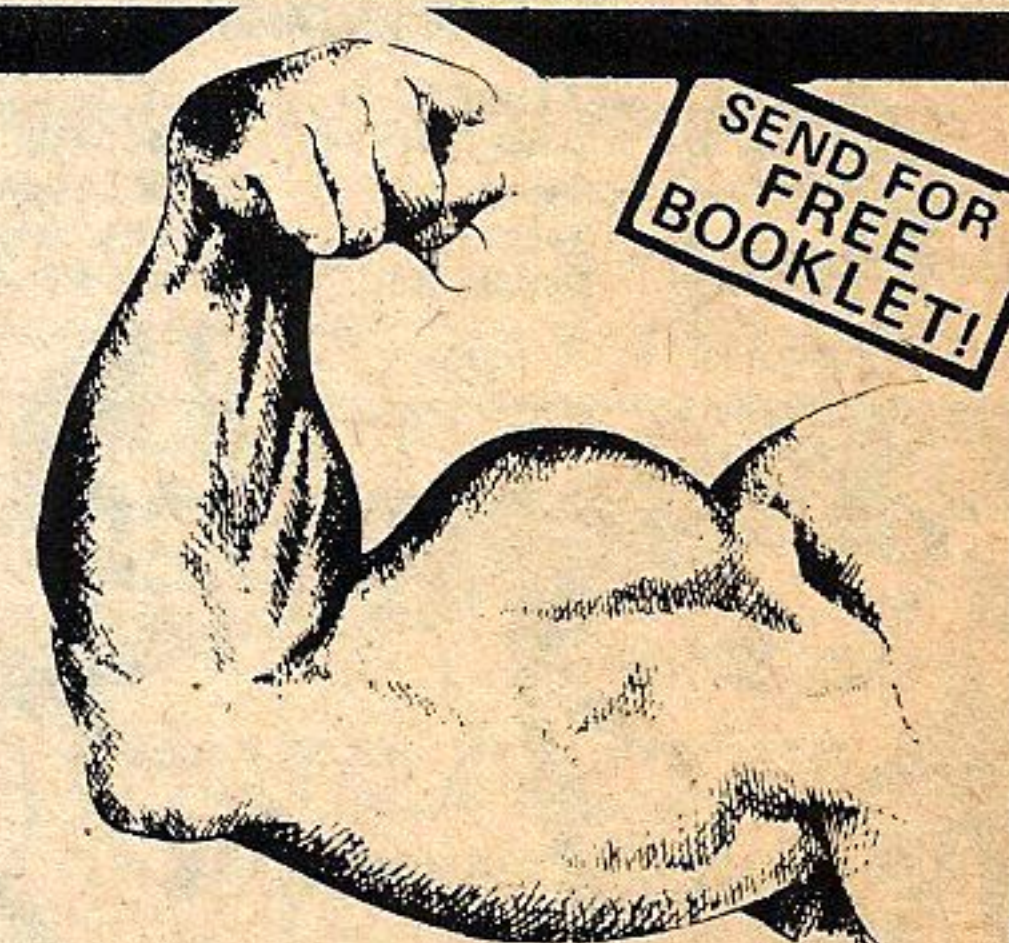
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RIC FLAIR

(Continued from Page 26)



Steamboat snares Flair in an excruciatingly painful headlock as he takes charge. Flair lost the United States heavyweight championship to Steamboat and so far has been unable to win back the honors—no matter how hard he tries.

he was going to destroy Steamboat. Nothing would be left to chance. Every move would be carefully planned.

By right, Rick Steamboat should have been worried. Flair was not a man to be taken lightly. He is tough. He is angry. He has the ability to maim an opponent in the ring. No one ever questioned that. Steamboat should have been more worried going into this match.

Flair was strangely subdued on the night of the match. He was very much in control of himself. He would not allow his anger to get the best of him. He was a man with a mission, and nothing was going to stop him. Just in case, a stretcher was

brought by ringside. Just in case.

The first minute of the match was the only time during the entire encounter when the action was not ferocious. The two men were trying to sense each other's weakest points. Apparently, in those 60 seconds, they both found something.

Ric was the first to launch an assault. Lunging toward Steamboat, he managed to knock the U.S. champion to the canvas. He tried to confuse Rick, thereby causing the young man to make a mistake. But this did not work. Steamboat knew what to do. He escaped and launched his own

assault.

Unfortunately, Steamboat's attack did not do much to advance his cause. Flair was ready for anything Rick might do. He just became more brutal, more vicious, more ruthless. He was a master, and he was exhibiting his talents. Steamboat began to look like a victim.

Somehow, Rick was able to stand up to Flair's increasing ferocity. It is a testament to the young man's abilities that he could survive at all. But he did. Barely.

Flair grew slightly frustrated. He began to get riled. He started to forget his plan of action. He began to brawl. He got sloppy. He was disqualified. It had to happen.

Without a doubt, Steamboat was worse for the wear. He looked like he had been savaged. Of course, Flair did not look too good himself. As would be expected, Ric objected to the referee's ruling. He wanted more time. He wanted to kill Steamboat. The chance was being taken away from him. But there was nothing he could do about it.

Flair slinked back to the dressing room, already deep in thought as to what he should do in the next match against Steamboat. He would be more savage. He wouldn't give Rick the chance to survive. It would be different next time.

As for Steamboat, he was relieved the match had ended as it did. He had learned a valuable lesson. He had discovered the passion with which Flair hated him and wanted him dead. The threats had not been idle threats. Flair wanted him dead. The thought unnerved Rick. No one had ever hated him so much. He couldn't talk with anyone. He needed to search his own soul for a reason. ☐

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Mascaras vs. Patera

(Continued from Page 39)

was told, yes, told, that I had to face Patera before Backlund would grant me the honor of placing the WWWF belt in the ring before me," Mascaras said, an uncharacteristic vicious note in his voice. "I do not brag about my achievements. I leave such boasting for lesser men.

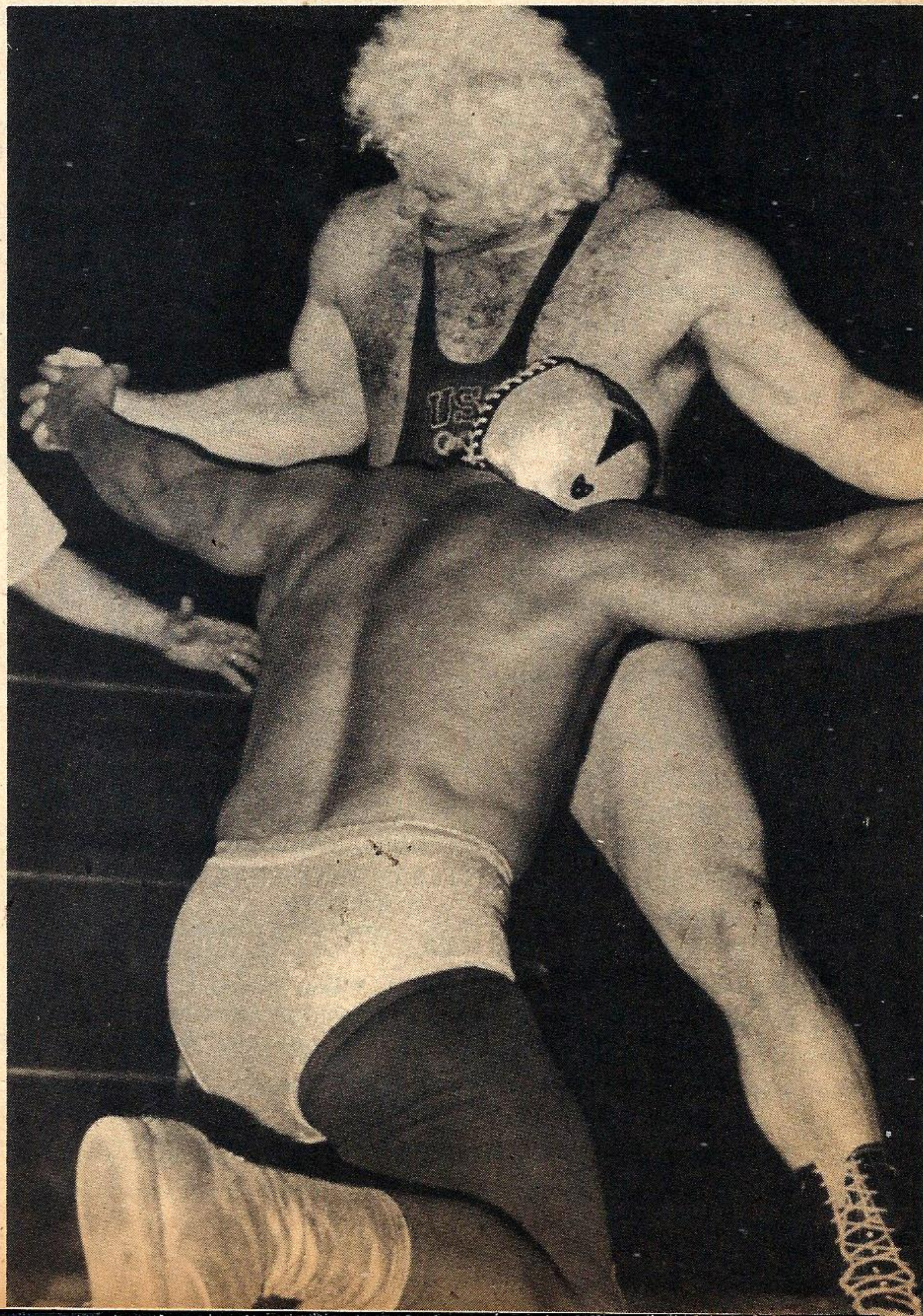
"Still, I do not feel I should have had to prove myself. My career is proof enough of my abilities."

"This is Ken Patera, the greatest wrestler who ever lived, being told that he would only get a rematch against that pansy Backlund if he wrestled Mil Mascaras, the man of a thousand liver spots," Patera screamed. "Me, Ken Patera, who has shown himself to be the absolute best in the world, treated like a rank rookie.

"What the hell is going on here?"

As difficult as it is to believe, Patera's point is well-taken, however predictably inarticulate it might be. Why was this match, which ended in Mascaras

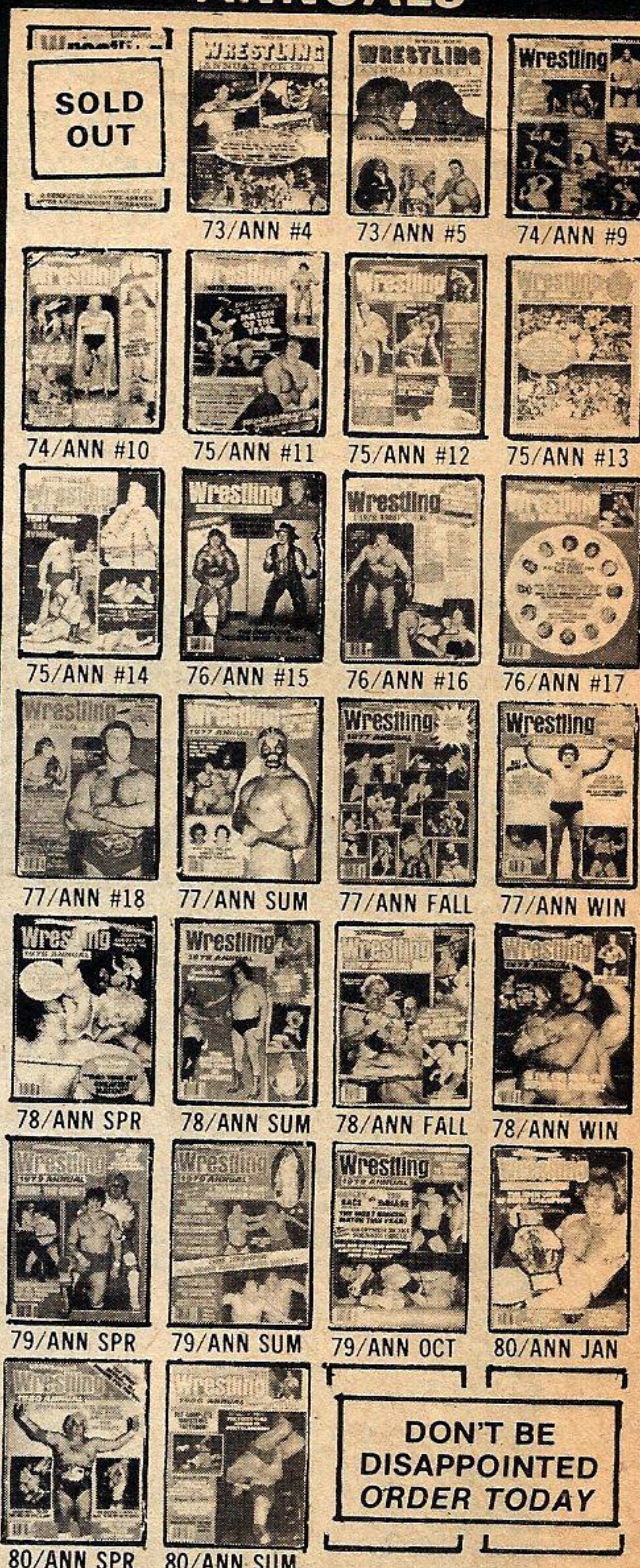
The self proclaimed "World's Strongest Human Being" brings Mil to his knees during a test of strength.



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winning by disqualification, ever scheduled?

"From what I've been told, Backlund and his people are tired of this one-a-day, bum of the night club, which has been going on for as long as anyone can remember," said a source within the WWWF commissioner's office.

"Instead of wrestling retreads and guys who don't even have any business going for the belt, Backlund has decided that by filtering out the top contenders he can guarantee the fans a super match every time the belt is on the line.

"No more one-sided bouts. When fans pay to see a title match, they know both guys will be top-flight. All I can pass on, and I shouldn't have even said this much, is that Backlund is doing it for the fans."

Perhaps Backlund feels he has a direct line to the fans. Other people involved in wrestling think that Backlund is assuming too much, or at least his advisors are.

"Backlund is a hell of a guy and his reasons are totally honorable. Bob doesn't have a malicious bone in his body," said a New England promoter. "The problem here is that while Backlund thought it was a good idea, he didn't properly calculate the effect it would have on the people battling for the right to meet him."

The major result is the demeaning aura which clings to all the contenders forced to go through this questionable process. They resent it. Unanimously.

"I was told that before Backlund decides to meet me I have to wrestle other men and prove myself," Dusty Rhodes explained with considerable astonishment. "This is the American Dream. Why don't

(Continued on page 58)

Mascaras vs. Patera

(Continued from Page 57)

they ask the fans who should wrestle for the belt. The jammed arenas across the country and my record speak for themselves."

"I deserve to wrestle Backlund for the belt. Again, I say this quite humbly," Mascaras said. "There was enormous pressure on both Ken Patera and myself to

impressive enough to warrant a title shot, uh, I did say a few unprintable words into my mask."

"The Living Legend and what does it get me? Treated like a 20-year-old rookie," Bruno Sammartino said. "I have won the belt and I always put my title against challengers. I would



Ken Patera's arm becomes Mil's prime target. Mascaras wanted the victory as badly as Patera because the winner was promised a shot at Bob Backlund's WWF title. Mil won—but by disqualification. He will not get the match. Patera also loses his chance since he dropped the bout when he was disqualified.

do well tonight. More than usual. About the level generally found in a title bout.

"I find it all quite humiliating. I would never consent to this again. Somehow, I thought I owed my fans this match. But when I was told that my disqualification victory was not

never force an established wrestler to go through this process. Times have certainly changed, haven't they?"

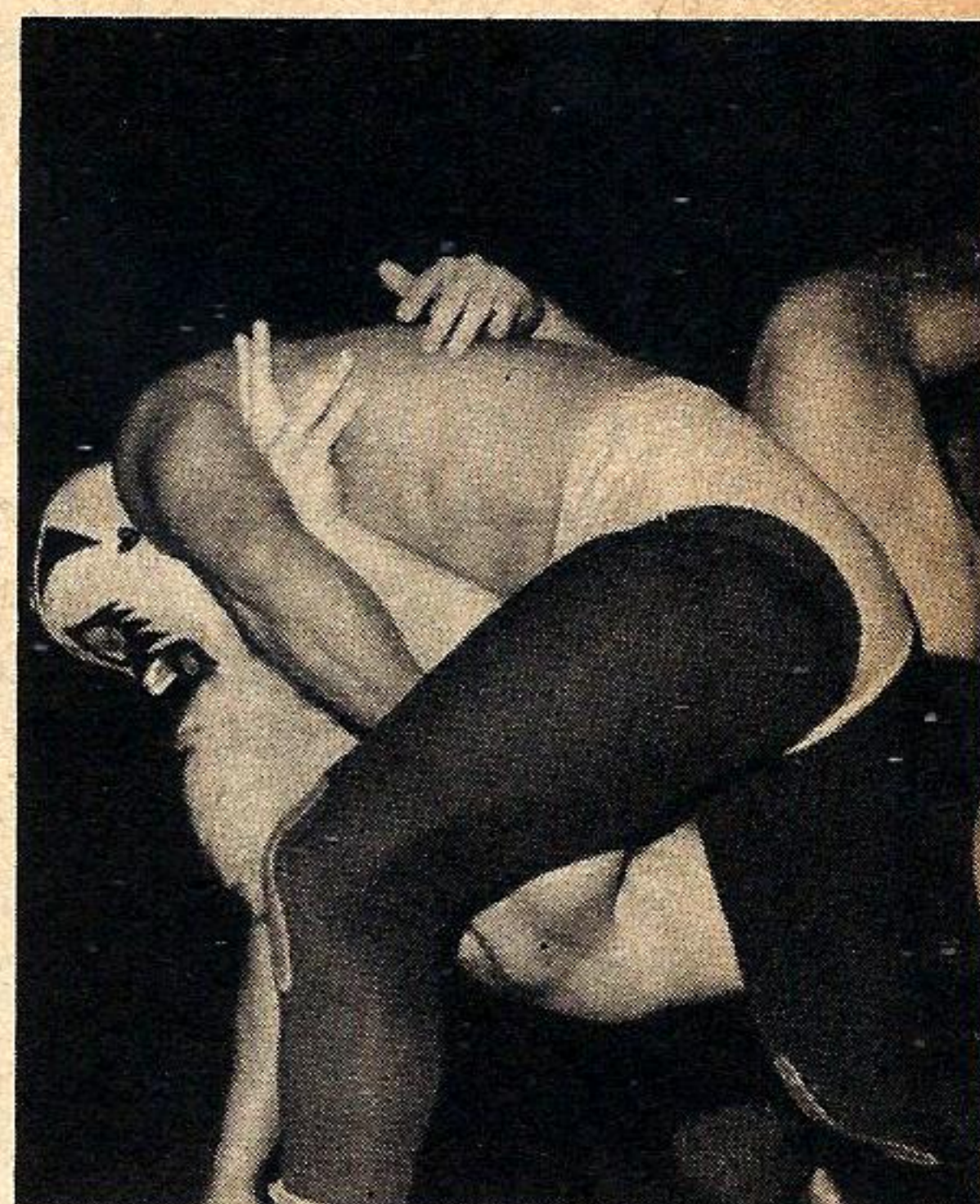
Confronted with this chorus of dissent swiftly rising into a mutinous symphony, Backlund finally tried to explain what it was all about.

And apologize.

"First of all, I want to express my apologies to anyone who was slighted by all this. I didn't mean to hurt anyone and I would never do anything that would injure another person," Backlund said.

"Especially, I want to apologize to Mil Mascaras. I have always had the greatest admiration for him and I didn't mean to debase him in any way.

"The reason I thought this would be a good idea was only to furnish the fans with the best



A hip roll by Mil sends Patera to the canvas. Mil trained extra hours for this bout which ended badly for him.

possible matches. It wasn't that I thought a Mil Mascaras or Dusty Rhodes had to prove their skills. I'd be crazy to think that.

"I just wanted some of the mediocre people to show that they are true championship contenders and not counterfeit versions. Fans deserve true title matches. That is all I cared about. Again, I want to apologize to my colleagues. Even Ken Patera."

What Backlund adroitly avoided was whether his policy has changed. For that answer, the chuckles of Mil Mascaras may provide a clue.

"I received a call which said maybe a title bout will be set up. But just maybe," Mascaras chuckled bitterly. □

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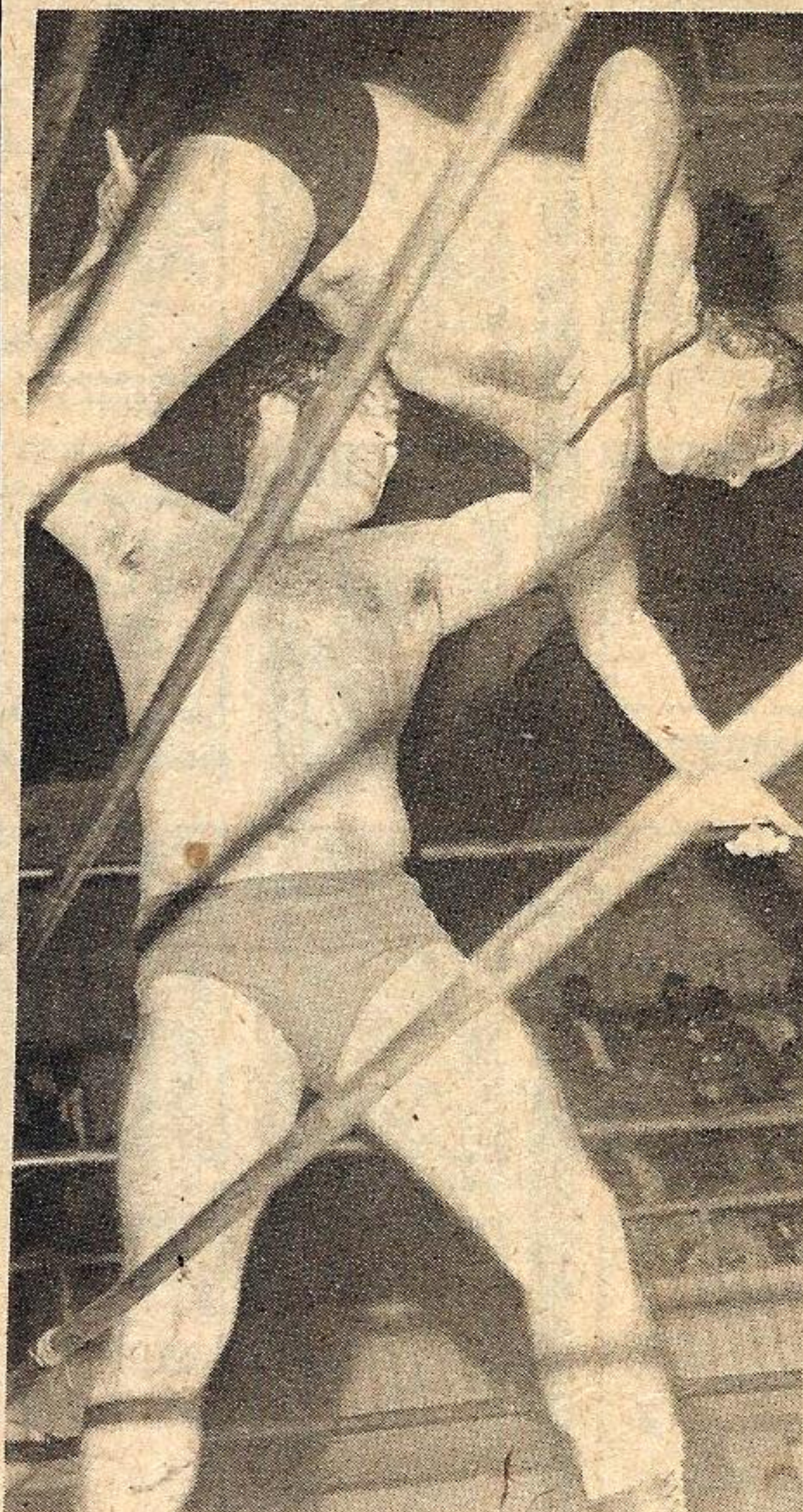
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CAN THE SLAUGHTER BE STOPPED?

(Continued from Page 44)

Lou Albano (right) points to an ugly scar suffered when he was attacked by a knife-wielding fan. Jerry Brisco says fans would rather see a clean match like the ones between Dory Funk Jr. and Jack Brisco (below) than watch a violent bloodbath.



Among the wrestlers to whom we posed that question, the answer was unanimous. "Nothing!"

"Wrestlers are like politicians," notes promoter Sam Menacker. "You can't get them to agree on anything. Do you think, for example, that if I told Bruiser and Crusher that I had Heenan and the Blackjacks' word that they'd wrestle strictly scientifically, they'd believe me? No way. If the situation were reversed, do you think for one second Heenan and the Blackjacks would buy it? No way."

"Violence and blood in wrestling is a fact of life. Period. How or why it got to the stage where it is now, I don't know. But it has snowballed to where one wrestler usually expects the worst and prepares himself for it. These guys don't trust each other one inch. And I can't say I blame them. Too much blood has already been spilled for them to start becoming gentlemen at this stage."



"Before you ask what can be done to reverse the trend," Mad Dog Vachon pointed out, "you should ask whether or not anybody really wants the trend to be reversed. I think you'd be surprised with the answers."

It was a good point. When Texas declared chain matches and a few other wild matches illegal, some fans supported the move. Yet many more complained that Texas would lose its stature as having the wildest matches in the United States. As one man wrote to the Commission, "If I wanted to see a gentlemanly activity—I'd watch golf!"

Most grapplers agree the violence and blood has passed the point of no return. Only a radical change involving heavy fines, suspensions and very strict enforcement of the rules could dramatically reverse the trend. But, and it's a big but, if the theory held by Ladd and Vachon is correct and the fans really don't want a lessening of violence, the application of such radical rule changes could hurt the sport. And because that possibility exists, it'd be next to impossible to get all the commissions and promoters to go for such a change.

Can we stop the slaughter? Perhaps we should ask, as Vachon suggests, if the fans WANT the slaughter to stop.

Do you? ☐

TURNBUCKLE CHUCKLES

(Continued from Page 18)

Larry Zbyszko was complaining to Tony Garea about the condition of his car. "My car is so old," Larry said, "the license plates have Roman numerals."

Small-town boy Bob Backlund is still awed by the technological advances he encounters in the big city. Recently, while in Philadelphia, Bob plunked 50¢ in an automatic coffee machine. Out came the coffee, the cream, and the sugar—but without a cup. After Bob watched it all go down the drain, he sadly said, "Now, that's quite a machine. Not only does it make the coffee, it also drinks it for you!"

Haystacks Calhoun may weigh over 600 pounds, but he's still an ol' country boy at heart. 'Stacks still remembers his hometown of Morgans Corner, Arkansas, population 793. "Boy, that was a small town," Calhoun reports. "I remember when they closed the local zoo. They had to—the clam died!"

Preliminary wrestler Mike DeMaio holds quite a record: 300 straight matches without a victory. Fortunately, Mike is able to joke about his fortunes. "I'm the cream of wrestlers," he says. "I always get whipped!"



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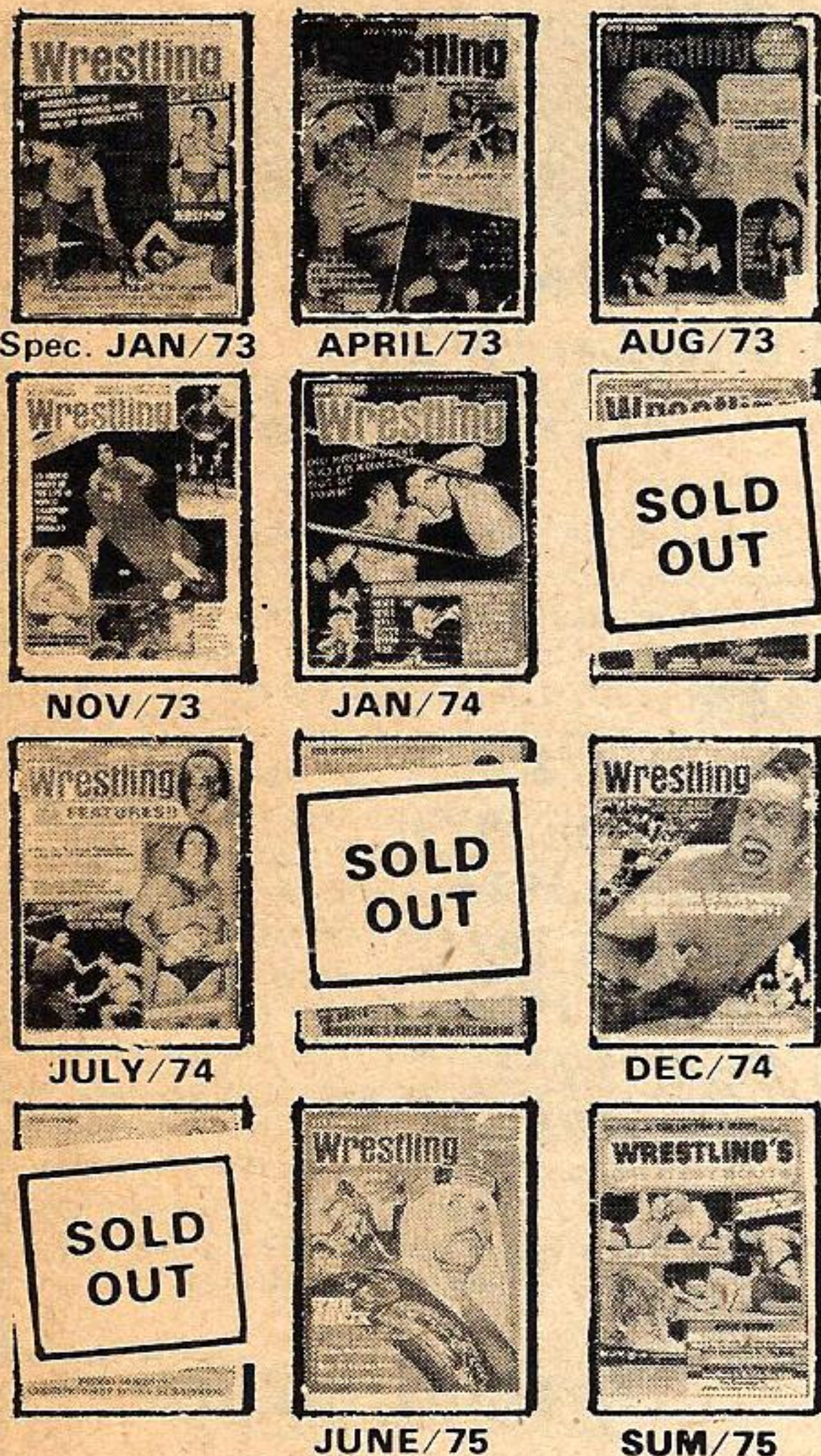
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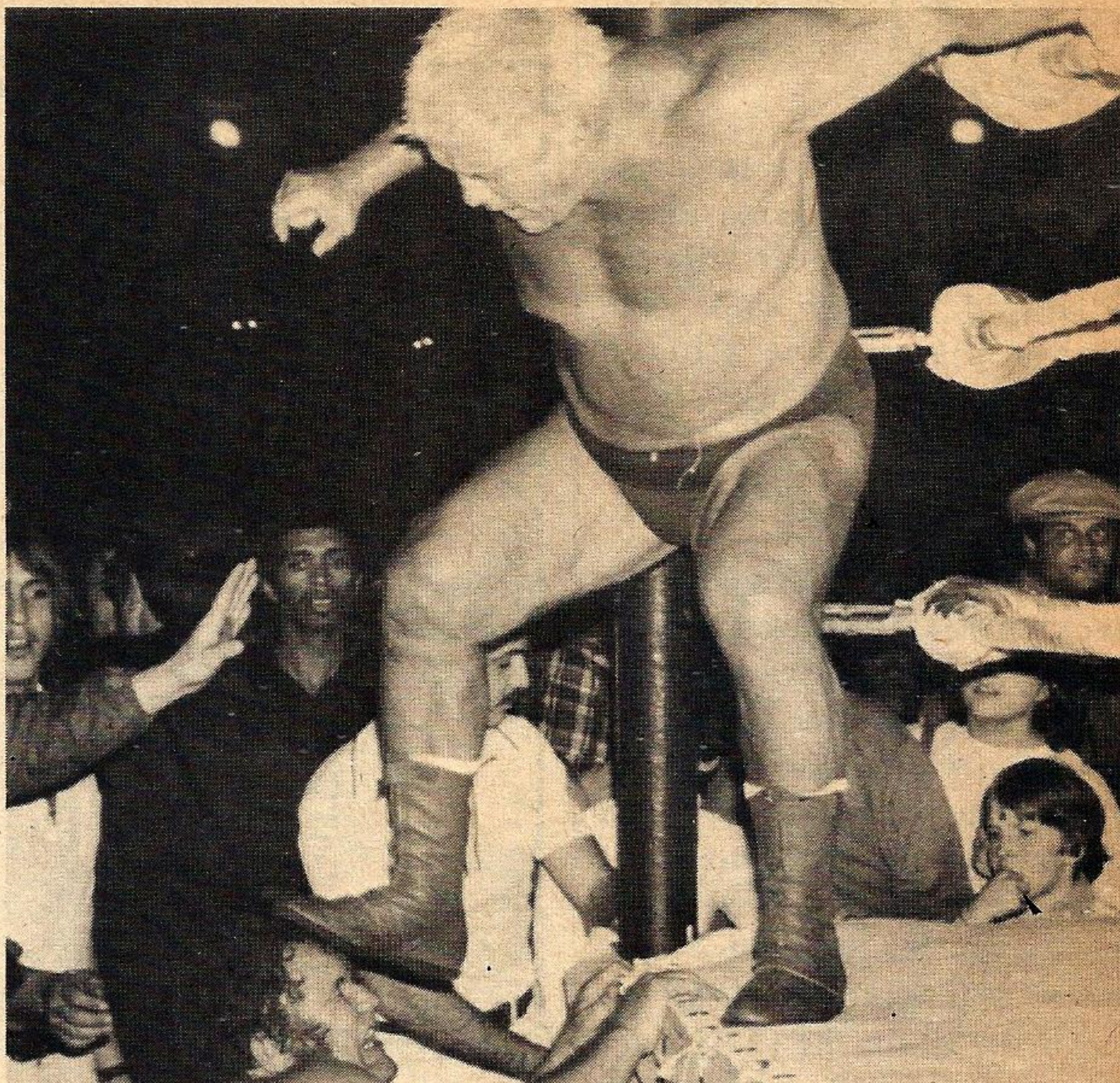
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BRUISER AND HARLEY RACE

(Continued from Page 49)



Bruiser kicks Harley in the face as the NWA king tries to reenter the ring. Although much of the match was scientific, violent brawling did erupt and the fans witnessed one of the best matches in years.

wrapped around Race's neck, Bruiser barreled his meaty skull into the NWA champ's stomach and tossed him backward. Race landed on his knees after doing an awkward somersault.

The second fall began with both men grappling furiously in the center of the ring, struggling to find an opening. Suddenly, Bruiser's right leg darted out and tripped Race onto the canvas. Surprised, though not stunned, Race dove to the side as Bruiser came crashing down knee-first, only to discover an empty mat. Harley scampered to his feet, leaped atop Bruiser's back and twisted the thick arm upward until it grazed Bruiser's neck.

A savage roar was followed by a spinning motion and

Bruiser regained the edge, the second fall ending with the titans rolling out of the ring.

"I don't understand why the WWA doesn't get more publicity," Race said after the match. "I can't remember a tougher opponent than Bruiser. He's something else."

Immediately after the match, talk centered around a possible rematch. Bruiser seemed quite excited about the prospect, as did Race, but for different reasons.

"I love wrestling someone like Race," said Bruiser. "I don't like him, but we do really go at it. Maybe people will realize that the WWA is a major federation and should be treated like one. The more opportunities we get to wrestle against NWA, AWA



As the match nears its climax, Bruiser does everything he can think of to try to win Race's NWA championship.

and WWWF guys, the better it will be for all of us. There's always a need for more good wrestling. All those rules about not having enough arenas makes no sense to me."

"Competition brings out the best in me. Wrestling against Bruiser again would be great. I want the opportunity to bash in his skull. He has nice-colored blood," Race chuckled. "But I just got a phone call from someone whose name I can't reveal. This man, quite influential, suggested that I hold off on a rematch with Bruiser. He said that he didn't want the WWA to get too much exposure."

Who is that man? An official? A fellow wrestler?

"Just someone in an important position in wrestling," Race evaded the questions hurled at him. "I didn't say I was going through with it. I don't care what federation you're from. If they don't like it you know what they can do. I'll wrestle whoever I want. No one threatens me."

There was a threat?

"Yeah," Race said softly. "Who's afraid of the WWA?" ☐

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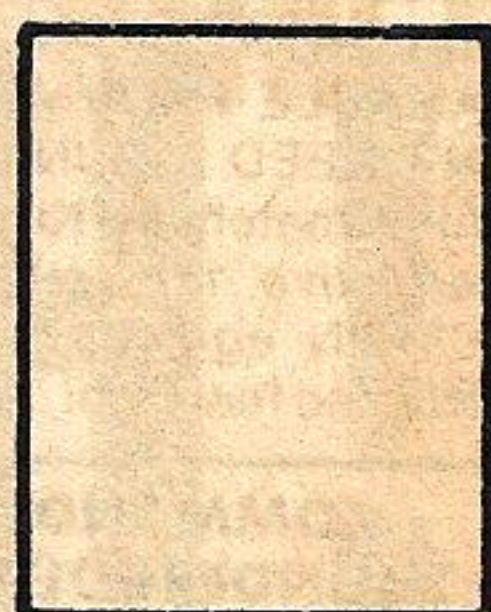
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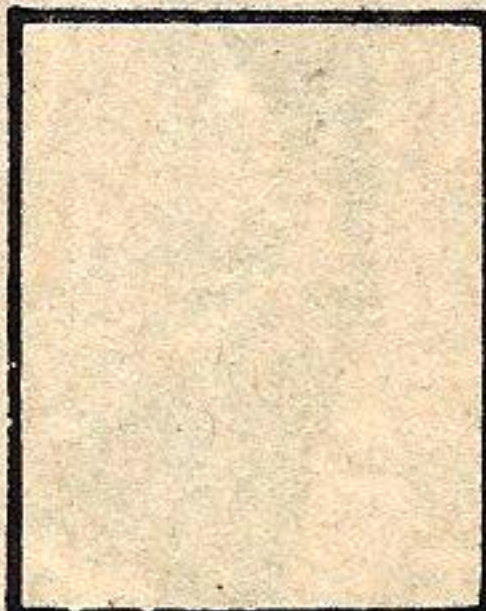
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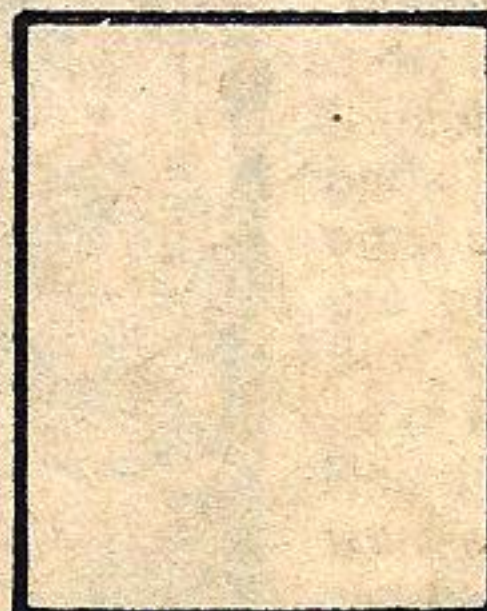
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